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THE

SERF-SISTERS:

OR,

THE RUSSIA OF TO-DAY.

BY JOHN HARWOOD,

AUTHOR OF

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THE SERF-SISTERS;

OR,

THE RUSSIA OF TO-DAY.

CHAPTER I.

Easter Day in St. Petersburg,—Easter Day of the year Eighteen Hundred and Fifty-four. Crowds of people, the natives of every country of Asia and Eastern Europe, jostling each other in the broad streets, and trampling down the slushy snow. The spring had been as unlike that of Thomson's "Seasons" as even a Russian spring could well be; and hail and sleet, and chilly rain, borne by hurricanes of wind that came howling unchecked from the steppes of Siberia and the icy plains of the North Pole, had swept through the wide thoroughfares, and battered the gilded domes of the city of the Czar. But on Easter Day there broke forth from the dull veil of grey cloud which still covered the sky, bright gleams of welcome sunshine, which shone upon the moving multitude who swarmed upon the muddy *trottoirs*, or plodded along through the half-thawed and miry snow. Every nation, every province belonging to Russia or bordering upon her colossal dominions, had its representatives that day in the avenues of the huge metropolis, whose granite palaces occupied the sites where, two centuries before, had stood the wooden huts of a few Istrian fishermen, and where the bittern and the crane had dwelt unmolested in their silent morass. There were Tartars with black bonnets of Astracan fur, wadded pelisses, and wide boots; dwarfish Finlanders, sturdy sons of the Baltic countries; quaint Chinese, whose long narrow Mongolian eyes, black and sleepy, but intensely cunning, might have caused them to be taken for Russians, had not their silky pigtails and orange-yellow complexions proclaimed them children

of the flowery land; tiny Laps, and fierce-looking fellows from the Ukraine, whose great-grandfathers had perhaps been Zaporogues, and who no more resembled the Muscovites than a wolf resembles a sheep-dog; chibouque-puffing Turks; Kurds whose necks seemed overweighted by the unconscionable turbans they wore; Persians in lambs'-wool caps and gaudy shawls; shivering natives of Hindostan; Circassians whose sparkling steel armour and crested helmets gave them the air of enchanted knights just awakened from a magic sleep which had lasted since the days of chivalry; white-petticoated Greeks; Cossacks in sheepskin jackets; Thibetians, Poles, Georgians, Germans, Magyars, half-starved Istrians, dusky Mongols, barbarous Samoides, and natives of Western Europe, together with soldiers and Muscovite *mujiks*, were blended in a motley mass, whose shifting hues were as various as those which a bed of tulips might furnish. A few sledges, drawn by steeds bedecked with crimson tassels, crawled slowly along the shady side of the streets, where the snow was firmest, while countless droskies and other carriages, from the humble telega to the superb "*carosse de cérémonie*" of an ambassador, ploughed painfully through the half-melted and begrimed masses which were exposed to the rays of the sun.

The half-bantering, half-angry objurgations of the *istvoshtniks*, addressed to the sauntering foot passengers who opposed a living rampart to the progress of their vehicles, blended with the shrill cries of the sellers of painted Easter eggs and palm branches covered with gold or silver leaf. The hum of the multitude, an ocean murmur in which were mingled a hundred varying languages, swelled upon the breeze like the diapason of a mighty organ; the jingling of the bells of the sledges rang out sharply and merrily, and every now and then a hush of expectation seemed to come over the throng, and even the voice of the palm-seller was still.

The *plotniks* and *butsniks*, the mounted and foot police, were actively employed in clearing a lane through the centre of the crowd, and laying about them with their clubs and double-thonged whips, as fiercely as the irresponsible janissaries of a despotic government are usually wont to do. It was marvellous to see with what spaniel-like patience the "black people," or peasants and artisans, endured the violent blows which the *butsniks* dealt with their tough cudgels to such of the loiterers as hesitated or delayed to clear the way at their

abrupt bidding. Hard buffets and savage curses were liberally bestowed upon the unlucky intruders on the space which was thus summarily cleared, and more than one person was felled like an ox by some more brutal policeman, and carried away senseless to the nearest quass cellar or brandy shop; but no murmur was heard, and neither sufferer nor sympathiser ventured on remonstrance or complaint. Men were lashed like hounds, but no hand was clenched to resist, no vengeance sparkled in the eye, no word of menace trembled on the lip; women were kicked and beaten, but scarcely a smothered cry gave utterance to their pain; while even children received cuffs with Spartan stoicism. Amid the cheerful voices of the young girls singing Slavonian carols for the festival, rose up, fit music for Russia, the sound of the blows of the stick and the suppressed moans of the feebler victims,—a demon chorus of punishment and anguish, the chosen pæan of a czar. But the lofty bearskins of the guards were at length seen towering above the heads of the throng, and the martial music rang out, as a column of stalwart grenadiers, picked from every province of the colossal empire which produces tall men, poured like a torrent down the Prospekts. Halting at the word of command, the soldiers formed a double line on each side of the open space in the middle of the street, and their shining bayonets and massive accoutrements seemed to oppose an impassable barrier between the expected monarch and his people. Clarions and drums send forth a flood of warlike melody that floats away through the crisp air, cymbals clang with a wild barbaric sound, bridles jingle, steel scabbards ring on stirrup-irons, sabres glitter, and chargers toss their proud heads, and sweep around their streaming manes, as the cavalry escort goes by. On they go, schako and helmet and bonnet of fur, the polished breastplate of the cuirassier, the green coat and brazen casque of the dragoon, the rich bravery of the hussar, the gay trappings of the lancer, the taper spear and quaint garb of the Don Cossack. And on this occasion were mingled in the procession warriors from distant lands, as strange in St. Petersburg as they would have been in Paris. There were Bashkir horsemen, clad in the skins of wild animals, with bows slung at their backs, quivers of arrows at their saddle-bows, and curved scimitars dangling from their belts. There were Mussulman Tartars, and Pagans from Caucasus and Siberia. But at last the policemen forgot to

strike, and the gazers strove on tiptoe to gain a better view between the bearskin caps of the troops, and an awe-struck whisper ran along the line of spectators, "Our dear papa Czar is coming!" "He is coming, our little father! I shall see him once more before I die," said an old peasant with a grey beard that reached to his girdle, as he strained his bleared eyes to look between the schakos of the guardsmen. "He is coming!—hush, baby!—hush, my little pigeon!—thou must not cry!" whispered a young mother to her unconscious child. Preceded by cuirassiers, who carried their carbines ready to fire at the first summons, followed by hussars in costly pelisses slashed with gold, and between two rows of armed giants, rode on in full uniform the epauletted high priest of Russia, the pontiff in jack-boots, the sacred emperor. His vast stature towered above the adoring multitude like that of a Titan amongst pigmies, and his far-reaching gaze stretched over a sea of bared heads and cowering forms as Mahometans and idolators, side by side with Jews and Christians, crouched humbly before the glance of their master. For all those he saw were his, a fragment, a tithe, a sample, of his boundless possessions. Before, around, behind him, were men of every creed and clime, children of every province, from the birch-covered Baltic coast to sunny Georgia; but all belonged to him—they, their wives, their children, their property, and their lives. No poultry in a barn-yard, no cattle in a meadow, no sheep in a fold, were ever yet more thoroughly at the mercy and exposed to the caprice of their owner and his hirelings than those thousands of thinking, feeling men and women, who bowed before the Czar on Easter Day, were at his mercy and under his control. And the unreasoning part of the creation have an advantage, in England at least, which the subjects of "the Emperor with the Mild Eyes" lack sorely. There is no Society for the Prevention of Cruelty on Nick's Farm! Very various, however, was the character of the emotion which the presence of the Emperor Nicholas caused in the bosoms of his slaves. For while the Muscovite of the Russo-Greek Church eyed his military pope with the same affection which a hound entertains for his master, and with a fervour of respect approaching as nearly to worship as the feeling with which a Neapolitan regards his patron saint, it was evident to a close observer that the love of the crowd was but partial, though the fear was universal. The Polish Ca-

tholic gazed, and there rankled in his breast the memory of his trampled nationality and his insulted altars; the Lutheran of the Baltic, or of the German colonies near Odessa, trembled for his freedom of conscience; the Moslem felt that the direst foe of Islam was before him; the Pagan regarded the Czar as a pitiless Moloch, the impersonification of a destroying spirit; and the wild Kaskolnik, the dissenter of Russia, whose strange heresies had often been chastised with sword and fire, scowled as he bowed his head before the object of his loathing and his dread, the archruler whom he considered in his secret heart as a triumphant and impious fiend. It was easy to see that fear, not love, was the cement which kept in cohesion the differing materials of which the edifice of Russian grandeur has always been composed. Wrest the scourge from the slave-driver, and the human cattle that are led to the pasture and the shambles, from Lapland to Bessarabia, and from Kamschatka to the Silesian frontier, will be free.

The Emperor passed by, gravely acknowledging the salutations of the throng; and, pursued by a murmur of blessings, vanished from their view. Carriages and horsemen, gold-laced liveries and caracoling escorts, the dignitaries of the state, the nobles of the court, the Czarina and the imperial family, succeeded each other in the procession. Pennons fluttered, lances gleamed, steeds curvetted beneath their richly-clad riders, pale beauties gazed languidly from the windows of their emblazoned carriages, high officials displayed on their padded breasts a collection of orders that resembled a jeweller's stock in trade, the young Grand Dukes, as embryo czars, attracted plaudits and admiration. Cannon roared, drums rolled deeply and sternly; the bells of the great church of St. Isaac mingled their metallic clangour with the jingle which a hundred steeples gave forth; and above trumpet blast and cannon salvo, rose up the shouts of the people: "Hurrah for the Emperor! Blessings on our little father the Emperor! Hurrah for Sinope!" And the grenadiers formed into column again and marched away, while the *butsniks* re-entered their watch-boxes, the mounted gendarmes trotted off, and the multitude began to disperse. A young Englishman, who had stood for some time an observant spectator among the crowd, now wrapped his cloak around him and strode rapidly away, turning down one of the avenues which branch off from the wide Prospekts, and directing his course towards a part of the city the most remote

from the more aristocratic quarters, and in the vicinity of the Great Market. The Englishman was a man of perhaps seven-and-twenty, with handsome features and a well-built frame, which, however, gave promise rather of activity than of strength. His high forehead and dark eyes gave a somewhat pensive character to the upper part of his face, but the smile which seemed habitual to his lips, and which displayed a perfect set of very white strong teeth, as well as the vivacity of his movements, evinced that the thoughtfulness of his disposition was by no means tinged with melancholy. His experience of Russia had evidently rendered him anything but an admirer of the institutions of that model empire, for he uttered, as he strode along, various remarks which neither the *Invalide Russe* nor the *Northern Bee* were likely to reprint. "A precious sight this Easter show!" muttered the Englishman, as he elbowed his way through a number of fur-capped and caftaned burghers, who were reconducting their wives and daughters from the spectacle. "It reminds me more of the 'Happy Family' than anything else. The raven answers to the Russians of the pure breed, talking, cunning, impudent, secretive and greedy; the owl may be the Moslem, the kite the Cossack, the guinea-pig the Chinese ——" But here the nomenclature of the various tributaries, neighbours, and vassals of the Czar was cut short by a yell raised first by a few children, and afterwards taken up by some drunken young fellows who came reeling out of a brandy-shop hard by. "Death to the heretic cur! Down with the Englishman!" screamed the urchins, and the mob took up the cry with a savage intonation that boded mischief. As if by magic, the road became completely blocked up by the half-intoxicated populace, who streamed forth from their drinking-cellars at the call, and two or three old crones in holiday garb, but with their tangled grey locks loose and dishevelled, rushed from the neighbouring houses, and began to curse the foreigner with all the fury of aged bacchanates. "Down with the false stranger! Curses on all Englishmen! Death to the friend of the Turks!" screeched the old women in shrill accents, and the children echoed the cry, while the men responded by a menacing growl. The young man strode firmly on, pushing on one side the first of those who attempted to bar his progress, when a louder shout burst from the crowd. "Huzza for Sinope!" screamed the Russians. "The cowardly English

are afraid of us; and we can beat the Turks as we please! Huzza for Sinope!"

The young Englishman turned abruptly round with a flush of anger on his cheek, and confronted the mob with a look of scorn before which they shrank instinctively. "Sinope!" said he, in very good Russian, and in a tone whose contempt abashed even his fanatical opponents; "I wonder you are not ashamed to mention it. I wonder that, Muscovites as you are, you don't blush when you speak of it. And you insult my countrymen! Take care that your deeds match your words. The day is not perhaps far distant when an army of Englishmen shall encamp in your capital, and give laws to your empire of serfs and scoundrels."

This rash speech, which, however frank was the Englishman's nature, would never have been uttered except under circumstances of great provocation, produced the same effect upon the rage of the mob as a barrel of naphtha flung upon a smouldering fire. A shower of lumps of ice—for stones are hard to find at St. Petersburg—hailed upon the bold speaker, and a dozen strong men rushed into the neighbouring houses in search of weapons, and soon reappeared, flourishing axes, clubs, and iron bars. The women mingled with the rabble, and strove to excite the anger of their sons and husbands to the highest point; and in spite of the calm courage with which the youthful object of the popular indignation confronted the clamorous boors, the scene acquired every moment a more gloomy and threatening aspect, when a mounted policeman came cantering down the street, and seeing the turmoil, made his way to the centre of the confusion. The gendarme inquired the cause of the disturbance, and twenty eager voices vied with each other in relating it. The satellite of justice coolly contemplated the excited boors, counted the lethal weapons which were brandished by the fiercest of the rioters, and then quietly turning to the young Englishman, put a tariff upon the ferocity exhibited by the people, and the risk incurred by the stranger. "To stop this affair is well worth a dozen roubles," said he, in a cold, indifferent tone, like that of a higgler at a cattle-fair. The Englishman produced a couple of blue notes and thrust them into the hand of the gendarme, who nodded in acknowledgment of the *douceur*, and carefully placed the flimsy morsels of azure paper in his breast-pocket. In an instant his counte-

nance changed, and from a careless spectator he became a stern and severe myrmidon of law. "Dogs, curs, churls, beasts," he shouted, as he laid his heavy whip unsparingly over the most violent of the crowd; how dare you disobey our Emperor? how dare you behave like a set of ignorant savages in the streets of the sacred capital of the White Czar? Off with you! hide yourselves, I say, or I'll have you flayed alive, to teach others not to bring the imperial metropolis into disrepute." These words, enforced by a score or two of such forcible lashes as only a Russian official can bestow, scattered the crowd as quickly as the bursting of a shell would have done. In a minute from the time when the policeman began his address, the street was emptied of its late occupants, none remaining except the Englishman and his mercenary rescuer. The gendarme grinned triumphantly, twisted up the thong of his whip, and rode slowly off, while the late object of the popular indignation turned on his heel, and strode rapidly away in the same direction as before.

CHAPTER II.

AROUND the large and highly-decorated stove which warmed a spacious saloon in what was evidently the house of a wealthy Russian burgher, seven persons were seated. Jacob Petrovich, the owner of the dwelling, a fine-looking old man with a high forehead and thoughtful mien, sat nearest to the porcelain furnace, whose fierce but steady heat diffused itself through the chamber, while immediately opposite to him was placed his ancient friend and fellow merchant, Paul Vlad, a ruddy, hale old trader, over whose head more than seventy years had passed, thinning his locks and turning his flowing beard from red to snow white, but without having dimmed the fire of the sparkling grey eyes which twinkled beneath a pair of beetling and shaggy brows. Anielka Petrovich, a beautiful dark-eyed girl, was talking in an under-tone to a handsome young Polish officer of cavalry, whose gay dress of blue and silver set off his well-proportioned figure, which, however, evinced more grace and activity than strength; while Katinka, the youngest daughter of the master of the house, a lovely little sylph, whose golden tresses and blue eyes were far more Saxon than

Muscovite in their character, sat apparently listening to the parrot-like chattering of Thekla Vlad, old Paul's ugly daughter, while in reality she marked every footstep which resounded upon the pavement without, and ever and anon bit her pretty lip with an impatience which had in it all the vivacity natural to one who from the cradle had been humoured in every wish. The seventh member of the group was an old and wrinkled woman, dressed in all the holiday finery of a Russian peasant matron, and wearing massive ear-rings of gold, a high and quaint cap, a picture of a saint in silver filigree pinned upon her breast. She sat a yard or two behind the semicircle formed by the rest, as if to intimate her inferior position and the fact of her being there on sufferance, although the interest and sincere affection which shone across her withered features as she watched the fair daughters of her master showed that she regarded herself less as a menial than as a member of the family. Yaska had been the nurse of both Anielka and her sister, and since the death of their mother, which had taken place nearly ten years before the date of the story, the warm attachment which she had always felt for her nurselings had increased with the pity and sorrow with which their bereaved condition had inspired her.

Jacob Petrovich was a man who could have done honour to any country, a man whose probity, kindliness of heart, and enlarged views, seconded by abilities of no mean order, would in a freer and happier land have rendered him a valuable and respected citizen. But he was born in Russia, and born a slave. The caprice of his owner had given the young Petrovich an education such as rarely falls to the lot of a Russian of humble birth, and for a short time after he had completed his studies, Jacob Petrovich, appointed instructor to Prince Jargonoff's eldest son, a youth of unusually mild and intellectual character, hoped to be able to free his neck from the collar of servitude, and work his way through life a free and unfettered man. The old Prince, pleased with the zeal of the teacher and the progress of the pupil, declared his intention of enfranchising and providing for the clever young serf, and Jacob was encouraged to look forward to the day when he might be able to claim admission into an inferior class of the "Tchinn," or official nobility, a privilege which the constitutional ukases of Russia grant to the applicant who can prove that he has been for a certain period a tutor in a noble family, when

his pupil was carried off by a malignant fever, and all the teacher's hopes were for ever buried in his grave.

The second son of the Prince was of a haughty and brutal disposition, and having been on bad terms with his elder brother during his life, had also bestowed a liberal share of his ill-will upon the unoffending tutor, between whom and Michael Jargonoff a sincere affection had existed. Accordingly, Jacob was driven from his patron's roof, all the old Prince's former favour having changed to indifference or dislike, and it was only at the request of the steward, who foresaw that the ex-tutor's acquirements would make their way, even in the little sphere of a Malorossian village, and who feared being supplanted in his stewardship, that the young man was sent to St. Petersburg to be a clerk in a mercantile house, being for that purpose duly provided with a licence, answering to the "ticket of leave" of a convict, and revocable at pleasure. Jacob throve to an extent, and with a rapidity, which neither the Prince nor his steward had dreamt of. His talents and industry were applauded by the Muscovites, who value "smartness" as much as the Yankees themselves, while his strict honesty and fair dealing won him many friends among the English and German merchants, who were charmed at finding a Russian who did not consider knavery and shrewdness as synonymous. Jacob traded, bought and sold, speculated successfully but prudently, and being neither a drone nor a commercial gambler, realized a considerable fortune, and married the daughter of a Finland shipowner, who had been educated at Stockholm, and was of an order of intellect very rare among the women of the mercantile class in Russia. But during all this time the chain that bound the serf to the soil was unsnapped, though slackened, and the collar of servitude weighed heavily on the neck of the unlucky Jacob Petrovich. Jacob was still a slave, as completely appertaining to the estate in Southern Russia of which he was a native, as any of the gloomy larch trees that grew in Prince Jargonoff's forests. True, the yoke was not apparent; no badge of serfdom encircled the rich trader's neck, and yet the unseen fetter never ceased to fret and gall its wearer. The superior guilds of merchants were closed against a churl, and therefore Jacob Petrovich was obliged to restrict himself to the home trade, or to being a mere broker and middleman in the more profitable foreign commerce.

Jacob was remarkably free from prejudices, an exemption not very usual in the Empire of Muscovy, and he often wished to travel, and even to reside abroad, that his children might grow up among nobler associations and under the influence of a more genial climate than the land of their birth could afford; but leave of absence is the especial privilege of a noble, and the serf on leave could never hope to be permitted to breathe any air but that of Russia. Worst of all was the conviction that the brand of slavery was hopeless, ineffaceable in his case at least, for no offers of money, no earnest supplications, had ever availed to mollify Jacob's pitiless owner.

Prince Ivan Jargonoff, on succeeding to his father, found himself the master of ten fine estates, and of as many thousand human beings of the male sex, technically inscribed as *souls* in the rent-roll of a Russian proprietor. His dislike to his brother's tutor had never died away, and if he permitted Jacob to remain at St. Petersburg, it was only from the same motive which prompts the cat to permit the half-dead mouse to crawl a little distance from its watchful persecutor, well knowing that by one stroke of its ruthless paw it can again secure the panting victim of its sportive ferocity. Jacob Petrovich would have beggared himself to buy his freedom. That boon was refused, but the merchant's gold was drawn from his coffers, coin by coin, in the shape of fines and exactions, every demand being backed by the terrible threat that in case of non-compliance the master would summon the slave to plough his fields and tend his cattle in Malorossia. Prince Ivan, like a leech, slowly and luxuriously sucked the blood of Jacob Petrovich, varying his oppression, now and then, by insisting on some act of servile humiliation, which to the thinking, reasoning man was as bitter as the sting of a hornet.

Still the merchant's daughters grew up, graceful and lovely, instructed in the lore of Europe, and refined by the accomplishments of the West; and though their mother died before they were of an age fully to appreciate her loss, their young lives were watched over with all the thoughtful love of a tender father, aided by the almost canine attachment of the faithful old Yaska, who was a native of the same village which had been the birthplace of Jacob Petrovich. No trouble had been spared, no cost had been grudged, by the wealthy merchant, to render his children the equals or the superiors of the pallid dames and damsels of the Emperor's hot-house

court. Foreign masters and mistresses of every art had been sought for by old Jacob, and had taught their willing pupils the more zealously that their sweet and natural manners contrasted as agreeably with the offensive haughtiness of the young princesses and countesses of St. Petersburg as their quick and intelligent appreciation of the charms of music or the beauties of painting contrasted with the mechanical and monkey-like rapidity of imitation which distinguished the majority of their aristocratic countrywomen. Yet often while listening to some silver Italian melody, thrilled forth with almost magical effect by Katinka's musical voice, or while gazing upon the faultlessly classic contour of Anielka's queenly head, the fond old father's heart would ache as if a dagger had pierced it, when he remembered that those peerless and delicate maidens bore in the blush of their glowing cheeks, circling in their blue veins, the inevitable, hopeless taint of slavery mingled with their youthful blood. No cattle of Prince Jargonoff's herds, no sheep in his folds, were more indubitably his own, than the fair and highly educated girls who had never seen the tyrant's face, nor heard the accents of that voice which might, in any moment of caprice or ill-humour, summon the whole family to be hewers of wood and drawers of water in Southern Russia,—to toil and dwell among ignorant beings scarcely superior in intellect to the oxen that they led to pasture, or the bears that they tracked among the pine trees.

Paul Vlad, the guest and gossip of Jacob, was of a very different stamp from his friend. He was a merchant and a Muscovite of the pure race, born at Moscow, a freeman, and belonging to the second guild. Astute and unscrupulous to a degree which would have made him a match for the craftiest trafficker of New Orleans or Boston, or even for Barnum himself, he was so completely encrusted over by the prejudices and ignorance of a thorough Russian burgher, as to have failed in realizing the ample fortune which his subtlety and freedom from principle seemed to deserve. He could no more shake off his load of superstition and prejudice than a lobster its shell; and it was a cause of much secret rage and mortification to him that Jacob Petrovich, though often generously aiding him with his purse to ride out some storm which threatened to annihilate his credit and prosperity, had always steadily refused to lend his assistance in any of his nefarious schemes of commercial trickery. This was reason enough for Paul's

hating his benefactor, for he had sense enough to see that his own cunning, backed by the erudition and worldly knowledge of Jacob Petrovich, would be absolutely irresistible, while of minor kindnesses Paul's memory was as unretentive as the sea-sand of an inscription. Paul, moreover, like most Russians, considered that every one who was not a knave, must of necessity be a fool; and had he ever heard the proverb which declares honesty to be the best policy, would have received it with incredulous scorn. Now, Jacob Petrovich was a puzzle to Paul Vlad. He could scarcely be a fool; shrewd, prudent, and sensible, his very conversation was enough to ward off *that* imputation; so Paul set him down as a rogue, who for unknown purposes affected to be a simpleton, and affected it so very clumsily that the shallow pretence could not deceive any rational person. Also, the old cheat hated Jacob both on account of the latter's deceased wife having been bred a Lutheran Protestant, and because he suspected that the merchant himself and his children were less orthodox and less fervent followers of the Czar than good members of the Russo-Greek Church ought to be.

Paul Vlad hated Anielka, because her suitor was a Pole and a Catholic; he detested Katinka for smiling upon an English heretical lover; and he abhorred both the sisters most cordially on account of the very refinement and grace which, anywhere else than in the dominions of the Emperor with the Mild Eyes, would have won them friends and sympathy. But the old man's jealous glances, as they ranged around the room, found ample food for the hatred and envy which filled his narrow mind. The gilded and richly-bound books in foreign tongues, chiefly English, French, and German, which loaded the bookshelves; the albums and portfolios of prints and drawings, the thousand delicate works of female skill or of artistical ingenuity, which lay upon the tables; the open piano with the music of Rossini or Meyerbeer lying carelessly across its ivory keys; the china, the ornamented French clocks, the knick-knacks on the *consoles* and side tables, were all crimes in his jaundiced eyes. There were the usual pictures of saints in richly carved frames, encaged in networks of silver wire, and with lamps burning before them; the usual high *samovar*, or tea-urn, was placed on the stove; the ordinary Easter eggs showed their rich colours in a porcelain bowl; but these Paul regarded as mere pretences, idle shows behind which to screen

the lurking heresies of Protestantism. The contrast between the sisters in their tasteful dress, every gesture showing innate elegance of mind and heart, and his own sallow, clumsy daughter, tricked out in all her ridiculous finery, with two watches at her ungainly waist, and a circle of silver tea-spoons calling attention to her flat bust, was painful and rage-inspiring enough in itself. Even he, a coarse hind, could see that his Thekla looked like a village wench beside two fair princesses of romance; and to embitter the mortification more, he remembered that these girls, whose pride of beauty awed and dazzled him, were the slave-born daughters of a slave. Even the smoke that curled in white wreaths from old Jacob's meerschaum savoured of rank Lutheranism in the eyes of his neighbour; for the ancient superstitious prejudice which once made the Russian Synod denounce smoking as a deadly sin still lingers among many of the more bigoted subjects of the Czar. It is curious, by the bye, that tobacco, which was prohibited by the Sultan, accursed by the Pope, forbidden by the Czar, and railed against by King James the First of England, should have forced its way in spite of so much opposition, and become the actual mainstay and support, in the revenue it produces, of many states which once rejected it as a poisonous weed. The Caliph of the Moslems, the Pontiff of the Romanists, the Patriarch of the Russo-Greeks, the Spokesman of the Protestants have all tried and signally failed in the attempt to conquer tobacco. The King of the Wahabees, the Chinese Emperor Tai Wang, the Temperance Society, and the Advocates of Women's Rights, are now at war with the victorious nicotiana. Will they triumph? or will the Triad Society and the Band of Hope prove equally unable to keep up the struggle, and will the invincible leaf be smoked alike in Darkish and in China, in London and in Philadelphia? that is a question which we may leave to the predicters of future events, to the Zadkiels and Raphaels who have replaced the Agrippas and Mother Red Caps of the old credulous times. It may be wondered at that an honourable man like Jacob should have continued to be intimate with such a commercial Robert Macaire as Paul Vlad. But, besides that the white-headed rascal had been wily enough never to afford his acquaintance any very positive information about his darker doings, and that the latter too good naturedly fancied that Paul's faults were only those of his class, and that a kindly heart beat beneath

his rugged husk; besides this, I say, Paul Vlad was rumoured to be on terms of intimacy with a high functionary of the Police; and in Russia few men could be found bold enough to reject the society of one who was surmised to be a satellite of Court Orloff and his dreaded coadjutors.

At last a quick tread was heard upon the slippery pavement without, and a sharp peal from the door-bell announced the arrival of a visitor. Katinka's rosy cheek flushed deeply, and her blue eyes sparkled, as she heard the long-expected sounds; and when the door opened, and the new guest was ushered in, the tell-tale blood which crimsoned her fair face was enough to have betrayed her emotion to duller eyes than those of Paul Vlad and his garrulous daughter. Mark Forster, the young Englishman whose rash candour had so greatly disgusted the Muscovite mob on his way from the scene of the procession, was indeed a fine, manly young fellow, whose handsome face, and eyes sparkling with vivacity and high spirits, would have won him golden opinions among the maidens of any country; while it was easy to see, by the manner in which his glance sought out Katinka as she stood half-hidden behind her father's great arm-chair, and by the interest with which he greeted the little northern beauty, that his heart had not remained unscathed by the azure fire that flashed from beneath Katinka's long eyelashes. The old merchant welcomed the young Englishman warmly and heartily, and with an expression of pleasure in his looks, which, to any one who had appreciated the fine qualities of Jacob Petrovich, would have spoken eloquently in praise of the principles and conduct of the favourite guest. Anielka greeted the visitor with an extended hand and a frank, sisterly smile; the Pole returned his good-humoured salutation in a manner at once kind and graceful; Yaska's tanned features beamed with pleasure as she answered his "Good morrow;" and Paul Vlad growled out a surly welcome; while his daughter Thekla stood up demurely and executed a ceremonious reverence with an air of solemnity forcibly resembling that of a trained dancing bear, and which caused the lively Katinka a desperate struggle with her rising laughter. Paul Vlad saw the signs of repressed merriment clearly enough; he saw everything,—the noble beauty of Anielka, the chivalrous bearing of the Polish officer, the sunny, open-hearted natures of Katinka and her heretic lover, and the innate goodness of disposition of old Jacob; and his own daughter's

gaucherie, and her tawdry taste in dress and ornament, and the absurdity of the two watches at the girdle, and the silver teaspoons on the breast of that unwholesome-looking virgin, half-maddened him with savage spleen and vindictive jealousy.

"You are going to leave us very soon now, my young friend," said Jacob Petrovich, when the new-comer had taken his place in the circle, and while the *dushtuks*, or men-servants, were drawing the heavy window-curtains, and bringing in a huge tea-table loaded with all the strange delicacies indispensable at Easter in St. Petersburg, and over which towered the brazen dome of a colossal *samovar*, or urn, with a furnace of glowing charcoal crowning its summit with a fiery ring.

"Yes, Father Petrovich," answered the Englishman, using the familiar appellation so common in Russian intercourse; "this war compels me to go home again. I shall be heartily sorry to leave you all, though; and I need scarcely say I shall not be likely to forget Russia;" and he sighed as his glance turned, half unconsciously, towards Katinka, who pretended to be particularly interested in the account which Thekla was giving her of some recent festivities which had taken place at the dwelling of a trader of the Gostinnoi Dvor.

"Well! I only trust we shall have you back again in St. Petersburg soon," answered Jacob Petrovich; "we must not lose one of the best of the engineers that have come from the West to bridge our rivers and construct our railways; and what will Prince Sheremetieff do without the inspector of his mines?"

"I can tell you what Prince Sheremetieff *has* done," replied Mark, with a laugh; "he has offered me a thousand roubles a month, the dignity of being promoted to be a member of the Tchinn, and the promise of a countship and a colonelcy after ten years' service, if I will agree to be naturalized, and remain to look after his mines as before. But I told him that if he would offer all the malachite, and iron, and platina in his mountains, and all the cattle, biped and quadruped, on his lands, and his estates and coronet to boot, it would be too little to buy a true Englishman. So he flew into a passion, and called me a fool, and bounced out of the room like a hand-grenade."

Paul Vlad snarled inarticulately, and clenched his fists under the folds of his flowing caftan, and Thekla gave a portentous sniff, as this anecdote jarred upon their national ears; but Anielka looked up approvingly, Katinka stole a glance,

half-admiring, half-reproachful, at the speaker, while her soft cheek burned more brightly than before, and Jacob looked so pleased at an act of good faith of which he had met but few previous instances, that even Yaska grinned like a happy negress in the background.

"But the misunderstanding between the English Government and our Czar will soon be cleared up; I hope so, at least," said the master of the house, in a voice which he strove to render as cheerful and hopeful as possible."

"You have reason to hope so," growled Paul Vlad; "for your warehouses are full of corn that you meant to sell to the hungry foreigners, and now it must be eaten by Russian mouths, or not eaten at all. I always said no luck would come of catering for heretics, and now comes the blockade to prove my sayings true."

"I own I have reason to regret having invested so much of my capital in wheat last year," replied Jacob, gently; "but if the ukase had permitted me to ship my grain directly for London or Hull, instead of my being compelled by law to wait till some merchant of the first guild would buy it of me, I should have had no cause to regret the speculation."

"That's what you always say," muttered Paul; "as if the ukases of the emperors had not always been made for our good, and as if any human wisdom could improve upon the decisions of our sacred rulers! I always said that foreign trade was a temptation of the Devil, and that though the fiend may bribe you for a time, you will be sure to feel his hot claws at last."

"Come, Batuscha," said the young Anglo-Saxon, good-naturedly, "you must not be so hard on us poor aliens. Some day peace will be proclaimed, and we shall all be friends again."

"Not so soon as you fancy, Gospodin Mark," was the tart rejoinder. "Don't flatter yourself that our Papa Czar will ever rest, now you have insulted him and helped his enemies, the barbarous Turks, until he has crushed you like wasps in their nest. Bah! Do you think we care for your trumpery ships? Our cannon will batter them to pieces if they dare to come near Sveaborg and Cronstadt. You have no soldiers, and our Papa Czar has more than a million of valiant warriors, such as those who conquered the French at Austerlitz and Borodino. Besides, you are all starving to death in England

and France; bread in London is selling at five roubles a pound! Aha! you think we don't know all, but you see we are well informed."

At this point old Vlad's tirade was cut short by a summons to take his place at the tea-table, where cakes of every shape and kind, rusks, jams, sweetmeats, caviare, tea, quass, cider, ices, white brandy, rein-deer tongues, red, blue, white, and green Easter eggs, bears' hams, pastry, champagne, and Curaçoa, were most oddly blended together, as usual at the supper-board of a wealthy Russian of the middle classes.

The conversation became animated and general, Paul Vlad's spiteful sallies serving rather to amuse than annoy his more amiable interlocutors; and after supper Anielka and Katinka both sang and played, at Mark Forster's earnest request. Katinka's voice and taste were exquisite, and an Italian ditty from her lips had all the sweetness of a bird's carol in early spring; but there was something so thrilling in her sister's plaintive and musical tones, when singing the sad but simple ballads of Finland, Muscovy, or Poland, that the remembrance of them haunted the ear like a ghostly echo of some fairy melody; and the Polish officer, Count Klapka, whose finely-chiselled features wore a look of habitual melancholy which showed that his life had not been untinged by sorrow, felt an unbidden tear dim the fire of the dark eyes which gazed so fondly upon her whose accents gave a fresh charm to the unforgotten chants of his enslaved and outraged fatherland.

It was late when the party separated, the Englishman seizing an opportunity at the moment of departure to exchange a few words with Katinka, in a tone inaudible to any ears but their own.

"I would ask her hand from her father to-morrow," said Mark Forster to the Pole, as they walked down the street together, the Englishman's dwelling being situated within a short distance of the barracks,—"I would ask her in marriage to-morrow, and the kind old man would consent, but she would never be permitted to leave the country; and I cannot barter my allegiance for that of a Muscovite; no! not even for Katinka's sake."

"I am as unlucky as yourself," replied the Pole, moodily; "for though Anielka has accepted me, and her father has agreed to our union, the Emperor's consent to my marrying and retiring from the service is withheld, and all my petitiions

for the restitution of a part of my father's confiscated property have been entirely fruitless. I am as much a puppet of the Czar's as the poorest soldier that bears a musket in the ranks; and I am doomed to see Anielka married to another, or wasting her blooming youth in waiting for the consent which the hard-hearted despot refuses, as callously as if his breast were indeed of flint."

Meanwhile, Paul Vlad and Thekla walked home, preceded by a servant with a lantern, and vehemently affirming that their late entertainer was a traitor at heart, and that of all the affected, insolent, odious girls in St. Petersburg, Anielka and Katinka were unquestionably the worst and ugliest.

CHAPTER III.

It is two hours after midnight, and sleep and darkness wrap, as with a dusky mantle, the myriad wrongs and woes of groaning Russia. The lamps which shine on dance and revel gleam from a few of the palace windows of St. Petersburg; a few candles burn feebly beside sick men's pallets in the huts of the "*tshernoi narod;*" a few lights flicker before the shrines of those saints whose huge pictures have replaced the hideous idols of the pagan Muscovite in the popular adoration; half-frozen sentinels, whose cloaks have been withdrawn by their capricious chiefs the instant the mercury of the thermometer rose above a certain point, pace to and fro at their posts;—no other sign of light or life is visible in the slumbering city. The soldier sleeps on his hard bed, the princess on her couch of down, the prisoner on his straw. And the morrow shall awaken each unconscious being to fulfil his part in the great drama. The soldier and the serf shall awaken to labour for a hard taskmaster; the princess shall open her eyes upon a world which to her is but a wearying round of frivolous dissipation; the prisoner shall arouse himself to bear the torture of the knout, or to moulder away hopelessly in his rayless dungeon; and the Czar, the mighty Moloch before whose pedestal flow tides of blood and tears, shall shake off the empire of sleep (an empire swayed by a dream-king, who perchance may often make the stern autocrat suffer a retributive punishment on the rack of fancy), and remember that he is the lord of a country which extends well nigh across three continents of the Old

World and the New. What an awful reflection is it to him who gazes on the man, Nicholas Romanoff, that the lives, the bodies, the minds, and the property of countless millions lie grovelling in the dust, to be trampled on by his massive tread. A bloodthirsty drunkard like Peter, a monster of vice and greediness like Catharine the Second, a frantic madman like Paul, have held that terrible sceptre in their grasp, and ruled over those sentient multitudes, as fitting guardians as the tiger for the sheep-flock. Is the hope too wild a one, that the Russian slaves may be rescued from themselves and from their tyrants, and that the generous ardour of civilization may overthrow the foundations of that fearful throne whose pillars are ignorance and oppression, and whose cement is human life-blood?

The sun rose clear and bright on the morning which succeeded the great festival of Easter, the clouds had rolled away, the breeze was sharp and frosty, and the air was keen, as the crowded population of St. Petersburg poured into the streets and squares, intent on celebrating what has at all times, from the days of the floral games to our own, been a period of general holiday-making. It was no holiday, however, for the horses of St. Petersburg, which, strung with tinkling bells or bedecked with gay ribbons, careered rapidly down the Prospekts, drawing innumerable light droskies and sledges, each driven by a grave coachman, whose silver-buttoned caftan, ample beard, and ponderous calpack, contrasted to advantage in their picturesque Orientalism, with the green, grey, or blue uniforms of Young Russia which mingled with every group. Already the giddy swings were whirling on high their laughing occupants; the target and stall of the gingerbread-seller were beset by aspirants for a shot with the cross-bow, and the prospect of an indigestible prize; the rude ice hillocks of the *Montagnes Russes* were polished by the passage of the gliding cars filled with boisterous merry-makers of the lower class; the peripatetic traders in ices, sherbet, and sugar-plums reaped a splendid harvest of copecks and paper roubles; the vapour-baths, quass-vaults, and drinking-cellars were gorged with men, women, and children, all of whom endured the suffocating vapour, or quaffed the liquid fire, from large glass measures, with a hardihood and unconcern which seemed to prove their throats of cast iron, and their skins of the consistency of buffalo-hide. Even the baby appeared to imbibe

the brandy which its brutalized mother poured between its infant lips with a horrible eagerness which told how early is instilled the taste for ardent liquors,—the only taste, perhaps, which the paternal government of Russia smiles upon, and permits to exist unchecked, among the miserable beings whom its fatal policy keeps in the dark bondage of unreason. Thousands crowded the temples; or bowed at home before the shrine or portrait of their patron saint, whose aid against the heretical foes of their Pontiff Emperor they anxiously implored; and the hymns chanted by the multitudes who had met to pray blended with the drunken hurrah for the massacre of Sinope, which rang through quass-booth and market-place. Through this lively but scarcely agreeable scene of unthinking jollity and barbarous debauch, slowly moved a handsome sledge, lined with rich furs and drawn by two spirited black horses, whose arched *troika* was hung with small bells which rang out a clear and merry peal at each fresh plunge of the high-mettled animals, which a portly driver, in a huge caftan of blue cloth with buttons of silver, was exerting all his skill to restrain. In the sledge, wrapped in the fur mantles without which few Russians of the upper or middle rank can bear to face even a moderate degree of cold, sat Katinka and her father. Katinka was a wilful specimen of the genus "spoilt child," who could not endure to be balked of a whim; and having suddenly taken into her capricious little head that the day was a charming one for exercise; and, sledging being nearly over for that winter, had decided that another indulgence in that amusement would be doubly delightful; that the ice of the Neva, a good way up, was certain to be sufficiently firm; and finally, that her father might, would, could, and should take her out on a farewell sledging excursion. Old Jacob was not quite as confident of the stability of the ice as his daughter. Papas are often somewhat sceptical as to the dryness of the grass, the fineness of the weather, and the constancy of the wind, when pic-nics, boating-parties, and similar out-of-doors divertisements are projected; but Jacob was a sensible man, and one fit to argue with women, for he always allowed himself to be over-persuaded with a good grace. It so happened that Mark Forster, who, during his frequent visits to the metropolis, had almost always accompanied the merchant's family on their holiday trips, had been on this occasion compelled to absent himself on business connected with his approaching

departure, while a sudden call of duty retained the Pole, Count Klapka, in barracks. Anielka was not as fond of dashing over the smooth ice of the Neva as her more vivacious sister; and moreover, their usual companions were unable to be of the party; so that the only sledge which left the large *remise* of Jacob's house that day was the one which bore its owner and his blue-eyed Hebe-like daughter.

Emerging from the peopled thoroughfares of the city, the sledge glided more rapidly along the causeways by which the marshy district near St. Petersburg is intersected, and soon approached the Neva. The frozen surface of the river, despite the lateness of the season, was crowded by burghers and mujiks in gala attire, escorting their wives and children. Skaters were displaying their skill in tracing complicated figures upon the smoother and sounder tracts of ice, and a score of sledges were dashing merrily along at the full speed of their sure-footed steeds; the chiming of the *valdai* bells and the merry laughter of their occupants floating far and wide upon the breeze of spring. Katinka clapped her little hands with rapture as the fiery black horses which drew their light vehicle were at length suffered to break into a gallop, and her eyes sparkled as the sledge swept over the slippery roof of the Neva with the rapidity of a snow-storm driving rapidly down across a wintry steppe. The majority of the pleasure-seekers had prudently limited their frozen play-ground to about a mile of hard and solid ice; but Katinka pleaded so eloquently to be allowed to proceed to a point above the islands, that old Jacob gave the necessary orders to his coachman, and the sledge flew as swiftly as a bird between the deserted banks of the river, passing groves of stunted willows, alders, and other trees, which love to strike their roots in the spongy ground of the fens. In a few moments the holiday-making boors and citizens were left behind, their cries and songs of rude joy died away in the distance, and the sledge rushed through a tract of country as silent and desolate as when the eyes of the Great Peter first surveyed its stagnant waters and melancholy thickets. The snipe and rail piped plaintively among the reeds, the bittern gave its harsh boom among the grey willows, the teal fluttered over the unyielding crust of the congealed mere. But there was nothing to speak of the progress of ages, or to tell of the boasted grandeur of the great city hard by. Not far off were wastes, yet more lonely and inhospitable, where

the wolf and the bear dwelt in their rarely disturbed solitudes, the aboriginal masters of the land, seeming to wait till the theatrical display of false civilization should be played out, till the hollow mockery should be at an end, and, St. Petersburg being abandoned to the devouring quicksands and hungry sea, the Istrian swamp should once more belong to the denizens of the wilderness.

Suddenly from a bed of tall reeds there emerged a man whon his green jager's dress, high mud-boots, and well filled game-pouch, sufficiently proclaimed as one of those professional sportsmen to whom the markets of St. Petersburg are in a large measure indebted for their supply of wild fowl and hares. These, however, are usually Istrians, and of a very diferent mien and bearing from that which attracted the attention of the occupants of the sledge to the person of the marksman. The latter was a powerful young man, whose blue eyes glittered with that quick light often to be noticed in those of an Indian warrior, while his tawny hair fell in careless length from beneath a felt-hat, adorned with a feather of the sea eagle, and partially shaded a face whose clear and rich complexion had been half bronzed by exposure to sun and wind. He had a gun slung at his back, and in his hand he bore an iron-spiked leaping-pole. But it was not the dress and equipment of the stranger, though these were more fanciful than was usual, which excited the curiosity of the merhant and his daughter. It was the easy walk and proud carriage of the sportsman, the lofty carriage of his towering head, and something almost defiant in his fearless gaze, which astonished Petrovich and Katinka, as being altogether unusual among a population so debased as that of Muscovy. A Russian clown usually plods along with bent shoulders and ungainly gait, like a bear walking painfully on its hind legs; and the erect stature of the purveyor for the St. Petersburg market seemed far more appropriate for some free Pawnee hunter than for a subject of that pattern monarch, the Mild-eyed Czar. The sledge had scarcely passed the stranger, and Katinka had hardly had time to say that the *cheseur* looked more like a Swede than a Russian, when the horses suddenly stopped short, throwing themselves well nigh upon their haunches, and began to inflate their capacious nostrils and turn their starting eyes windwards, with every indication of alarm. Vainly did the driver apply the lash with

stinging effect; a succession of plunges alone rewarded his exertions. Fruitlessly did he exhaust the endearing epithets of which every moujik can be so lavish on occasion; no persuasion would induce the recusant horses to progress a yard. The old merchant became equally surprised and alarmed, and proposed that they should hasten homewards. But now a long-drawn moan, like that of some huge creature in pain, was heard along the river, and then a shudder like the peculiar vibration produced by an earthquake made the strong ice of the Neva quiver. The affright of the horses was now so great that they became unmanageable, and stood still, shaking tremulously in every limb, with pricked-up ears and coats wet and reeking with heat. Katinka's merry voice was hushed, and she clasped her hands convulsively together, while old Jacob lent forward and spoke in a whisper to the coachman, who muttered a reply of which Katinka could only distinguish a few terrible words—"The ice must be giving way above." O how bitterly did the wilful little beauty repent her capricious determination to go on so rash an excursion, and how her heart smote her as she reflected on the fearful risk which her childish fancy had occasioned, not only to herself, but to her indulgent old father, whose pleasure from her nursery days it had been to forestall or fulfil her wishes. She bowed her head down, and hid her face in her furred mantle, while the tears gushed fast from her blue eyes, as she thought of her imprudence and its results. Jacob Petrovich, though much agitated, was the only one of the party who preserved sufficient presence of mind to attempt any active means of escape, for the coachman was so much alarmed that he could scarcely retain a mechanical grasp of the reins, frantically invoking St. Nicholas and St. Vladimir the while, and occasionally interrupting his orisons by a burst of vehement abuse addressed to the obdurate steeds. Poor old Jacob sprang out of the sledge, and, seizing the bridles of the horses, tried hard to drag the animals towards the shore, but his feeble efforts proved useless; the snorting brutes remained as firmly rooted to the spot as if they had been carved in stone. Another groan resounded ominously along the Neva, again the ice trembled, and a harsh grating sound, like that of a sawmill at work, succeeded. Then came a thundering crash, such as the fall of a mighty tree beneath the axe of the woodman might have produced, and then a dull roar, mingled with a clashing and metallic sound, resembling

that caused by vast sheets of iron violently beaten together. "Are you mad, that you tempt your fate thus?" shouted a deep voice from the bank, as the fowler whom they had previously descried arrived at a spot parallel with that on which the sledge remained stationary; "or have you the gift of breathing under water, as the fish have? Come to shore, and be quick, as you value your lives. Last spring I saw two bears drowned where your sledge is standing now." Jacob Petrovich abandoned the obstinate horses, and hastily began to assist Katinka, who was encumbered by a mountain of warm cloaks, to alight, and the driver was in the very act of descending from his perch, when an explosion as loud as the report of a score of cannon resounded, and the compressed air beneath blew up the ice in places with a force little inferior to that of gunpowder, and the hitherto firm surface cracked and split with a succession of echoing sounds as sharp and well defined as pistol shots.

"You are too late," exclaimed the wildfowl shooter, "stay where you are. It will be your safest plan." And in fact in another moment a yawning chasm gaped between the sledge and the shore. The catastrophe which occurs every spring was taking place more early than on ordinary occasions; that is to say, the masses of broken ice from Lake Ladoga were seeking their natural outlet in the Neva, and the crust of the frozen river was yielding to the enormous and irresistible pressure. The solid sheet of congealed water which had furnished so admirable a pavement for the sledgers and skaters throughout the winter was now shattered into irregular fields and misshapen "hummocks" of ice, between which the chilly stream was distinctly visible as it hurried on to meet the sea.

The mass which sustained the sledge and its occupants now began slowly to move down the stream, sluggishly obeying the impulse of the river, and bearing away those whom it supported as easily as the vast rafts of the Rhine bear their numerous and heterogeneous crew. The coachman beat his breast and tore his beard with vexation, while his cries for aid embraced every saint in the Greek calendar. Jacob grew pale, and his voice shook as he vainly tried to re-assure the shrinking Katinka, who with white lips and stony eyes sat wringing her hands in silence, too much terrified to weep. The danger was imminent and terrible of their being thus floated out to sea to perish, before any human power could rescue them, even

were their peril known; but this was not the only risk to which their imprudence had exposed them. A grim phalanx of frozen giants, the huge icebergs of Lake Ladoga, came swimming ponderously down the stream like a herd of Arctic monsters, crushing or sinking the comparatively feeble crust of the Neva as easily as a rock rolling down a mountain side uproots the puny trees that essay to bar its resistless progress. Katinka shuddered at the sight of these floating fortresses of crystal, fringed with lake-weed, that drooped over their pellucid battlements like the banners of a castle-keep, and which advanced rapidly, grinding to dust or sending to the bottom the heavy blocks and ice fields in their path. Nearer and nearer came the sparkling mounds, rising like diamond cliffs above the sedgy banks of the Neva, and showing innumerable shades of the prismatic hues as their fantastic crags gave back the lustre of the sun. Katinka sank down sobbing to the bottom of the sledge, speechless with fear; old Jacob clasped his trembling fingers, fixed his aged eyes, now streaming with unwonted tears, upon the pale grey sky, and prayed silently. The icebergs swept on in ruthless strength. The horses, long paralysed by fear, now seemed to be aroused by the "instinct of self-preservation," an instinct which, under the circumstances, proved more perilous than their previous repose. Snorting and rearing, they tugged against the sharp bits, and strove madly to dash forward into the gulf of water which yawned between the sledge and land. The driver prayed to St. Isaac, and clutched the reins despairingly. A violent struggle ensued, the floating mass reeled beneath the stamping of the rebellious steeds, who, snorting wildly with terror and excitement, pressed on towards the edge of the transparent raft which alone intervened between them and destruction. The coachman dropped the reins, and flung himself from his seat. Katinka raised herself by a supreme effort, and gazed distractedly around her, then uttered an involuntary cry of wonder and joy. An active figure, armed with a long leaping-pole, came rapidly springing from mass to mass of the floating ice, resting no longer on each slippery mound than a seagull lingers upon the crest of a wave, and taking such bold and prodigious bounds as seemed scarcely practicable for any creature less agile than a chamois. In the next instant, the young wildfowl shooter was beside the sledge, and in a moment more

he stood in front of the terrified horses, which had already approached frightfully near the verge of the chasm which separated the ice-field from the reedy shore, along whose willowy bank the stream was gradually impelling it. Seizing the bridles of the horses, he put forth his great strength, and flung the animals back at once upon their haunches. For an instant, the startled brutes submitted to this vigorous restraint, but soon their blind fears returned, and with pawing feet and glaring eyeballs they reared and plunged furiously, straining every nerve, like fiends striving to overthrow the exorcist. Katinka and her father almost forgot the fearful stake they had in the issue of the conflict in the anxious eagerness with which they watched such a strife as might have taken place thousands of years ago between the centaur horsetamers of Thessaly and the desert coursers they subjugated. The fiery black steeds, with smoking nostrils and bristling manes, half reared upon their iron-shod hind feet, with every muscle working and salient, would have afforded a magnificent study to a sculptor, while the figure of the dauntless youth who, within a yard or two of certain death, freely risked his own life to save those of strangers, would have served as a model for a young Hercules, such as few statuaries have ever been fortunate enough to behold. Thrown unconsciously into an attitude which admirably set off the noble proportions of his frame, his iron fingers clenching the bridles with a grasp which seemed superhuman in its force, his form erect, his head thrown back, the adventurer confronted the maddened steeds with a mien as resolute as a lion's when he turns to bay. His blue eyes flashed with the fire of resolution, his strong white teeth shone beneath his haughtily curling lip; his hat had fallen off, and his long tawny hair fell like a Numidian lion's mane around his glowing cheeks and majestic brow. The horses dashed themselves against him like waves against a rock, but only to recoil, foaming and baffled by the strength of those mighty arms which subdued and bore them down in spite of their struggles and their weight. The panic-stricken driver had now sufficiently recovered to lend his assistance, and the horses gave up the contest, and remained still, trembling but submissive. The icebergs still advanced; but the young giant who in so critical a moment had come to the aid of the merchant and his daughter, now proved as useful an auxiliary as before, for vigorously

pushing the nearest hummocks with his pole, he succeeded in forcing the swimming mass so near the bank, that it finally grounded on a small promontory of swampy ground.

"Now, ashore with you! Don't spare the whipcord, and be quick!" exclaimed the fowler, in a voice so imperative that the coachman obeyed on the instant. The reins were slackened, the lash was laid furiously over the reeking horses, and with a great bound which nearly overturned the sledge, the excited animals sprang forward. The ice-field receded from the land as they neared its edge, but by a bold leap and a desperate flounder, the steeds gained a footing on the bank, dragging the sledge after them. The ice-field had now retrograded to a distance of six or eight feet from the shore, and was drifting down the stream, when the young sportsman, who had apparently overlooked his own danger in his anxiety about those whom he had rescued, suddenly saw the fast-widening gulf. He picked up his hat which lay at his feet, coolly replaced it on his head, and giving such a spring as a wild goat uses to clear a chasm in the mountains, alighted safely upon the bank, though encumbered by the fowling-piece and game-pouch at his back. Very shortly afterwards, the leading iceberg overtook the mass which had lately borne the sledge, and passed over it as easily as a frigate would pass over the bark canoe of a Carib. Old Jacob, his daughter, and their servant, fell on their knees and prayed, with all the genuflexions proper to the Greek Church. The stranger took off his hat, and leant against a tree, silently and with half-closed eyes. Perhaps he prayed too.

CHAPTER IV.

While Jacob Petrovich and his youngest daughter were incurring what was probably the most imminent danger which they had ever encountered, the unconscious Anielka was wending her way towards the church of St. Isaac, accompanied by her faithful old nurse. Mingling with a crowd of worshippers who were pouring up the granite steps which led to the wide portals of the vast cathedral, Yaska and her young mistress entered the aisles at the moment when the service was about to commence, and while the deep voice of one of the officiating priests was bidding all infidels to quit the sacred

building,—a summons which was obeyed by several Jews and Mahometans from remote provinces, who were standing curiously near the door, Anielka and Yaska passed up the pillared aisle, and mingled with the kneeling crowd. The mass commenced, with all the imposing ceremonies belonging to the Greek ritual, and the fumes of incense, the chanting of an almost unrivalled choir, whose united voices pealed forth as sweetly and powerfully as those of some angelic host, the bursts of music with which the solemn organ shook the colossal church, combined to overpower and dazzle the minds of the thousands who bowed their heads before the high altar. The Emperor was there, with the Empress and the Archdukes and Archduchesses of the imperial race of Romanoff; while a brilliant crowd of officers in gaudy uniforms, whose breasts sparkled with stars and crosses, of noble ladies and of robed dignitaries of the state and the church of Russia, gleamed around them like a galaxy. Above, the vaulted dome, all carved and decorated with elaborate paintings in fresco, blazed with fretted gold, and azure, and crimson, and purple, and flung a rainbow of gorgeous hues upon the pavement beneath, as the sun poured its wintry rays through the storied windows. Anielka was an enthusiastic and noble-hearted girl, with whose very nature the sentiment of religion was so inextricably entwined that it could only have been eradicated by the destraction of the entire fabric of her soul. With her, piety was less the offspring of education than of the affections, and when she prayed, it was not with the cold and measured accents of a chilly and worldly faith, but with a spontaneous energy of passionate devotion, which caused the words she uttered to rise unconsciously to her lips, like the involuntary homage to his Maker which the wild-bird pours forth when he carols, light-hearted and happy, on a blossomed bough.

As Anielka knelt on the pavement of that stately church, the ceremonial observances which succeeded each other with bewildering rapidity awed and dazzled her, but did not satisfy the cravings of her soul. She thought of her Swedish mother,—that delicate, patient, suffering being, the memory of whose saintly precepts fondly uttered to her child as she bent over Anielka's bed when she was almost an infant, and whose sad and gentle eyes, seemed to her recollection more like those of a guardian angel than of any mortal. The holy words thus whispered to her ears in childhood had never been forgotten, and came

back to her as she knelt before the tawdry pictures in the church of St. Isaac, like the distant echo of a heavenly hymn. Anielka was at heart, though all unconsciously to herself, a Protestant. Of this fact, however, she was in total ignorance, and nothing could have been more agonizing to her feelings than to have been enlightened as to her real sentiments with regard to the faith of her fathers, which, all superstitious as it was, she had ever been accustomed to regard with obedience and reverence. On the present occasion she was overpowered and fascinated by the flood of seraphic harmony in which the liquid voices of the choir vied with the majestic strains of the organ, which actually shook the dome, making the captured Turkish and Persian standards flap their silken folds to and fro as they hung from the roof. The ceremony of Easter Monday being of a most imposing and magnificent character, many strangers of different denominations of Christianity had joined the throng of worshippers in the cathedral, from motives of curiosity. Among these stood leaning against one of the prodigious columns of the aisle the elegant figure of Count Klapka, whose ardent gaze, however, far from being fixed on the pomp of the Easter pageant, was riveted on the beautiful face of his loved Anielka, whose speaking eyes upturned in prayer, looked so pure and holy, that Klapka half doubted for the moment whether it were not a sin to aspire to wean so noble a being to an earthly love. This thought, however, soon passed away, but the young Pole still deemed it would be a profanation to gaze longer upon her while she was thus unaware of his presence and so rapt in devotion, and with one lingering look he quitted his post in the shadow of the pillar against which he had been leaning, and descended the steps of the cathedral, inwardly resolving never to reveal to Anielka that he had been an unobserved witness of the sincere and fervent piety, which, although he professed another creed than her own, had increased tenfold the love he bore her. Shortly after Count Klapka's departure the ceremony concluded, and Anielka and her nurse quitted the church with the throng, lingering for a moment on the granite stairs to watch the departure of the imperial court, whose well-appointed equipages and gallant cavalry escort attracted many deafening plaudits from the buzzing multitude.

The walk homewards to the neighbourhod of the Great Market was a long and chilly one, for the short-lived day was

already beginning to wane, and a sea of fleecy clouds had obscured the sun; but at length they reached their home, where the old merchant and Katinka had arrived half an hour before. Anielka was startled at hearing of the awful peril which had recently menaced the lives of those so dear to her, and shed tears of joy and gratitude for the preservation of her father and sister; while Katinka recounted with all her childish earnestness, how near destruction her parent and herself had been, and told of the courage and magnanimity which the young fowler had displayed in rescuing them from their impending fate; and how the latter was named Yanos, and was an Esthonian by birth; and how he had refused all Jacob Petrovich's grateful offers of recompence, though only a poor hunter who lived by shooting wildfowl for the market of St. Petersburg; and, lastly, how he had promised to come and see them that evening or the next. But Katinka did not think fit to mention the evident admiration which the young Esthonian entertained for her, and which was probably the reason why one whose nature, like that of many men accustomed to dwell among the lonely woods, was rather stern and unsociable than otherwise, had so readily consented to visit a family of a higher rank than his own. Old Jacob corroborated Katinka's account, and expressed his hearty regret that the wilful and somewhat perverse pride of Yanos had led him to refuse every proffer of money or services.

He trusted, however, that the obstinacy of the young man, who had frankly admitted that his only means of gaining a living was by his skill as a marksman, would give way in time, or that he should be able to discover some more acceptable mode of rewarding one whom he should always honour as the preserver of himself and his child.

CHAPTER V.

Count Klapka had walked, in a waking dream, more than twice along the entire extent of the Nevskoi Prospekt, whither he had turned his steps on leaving the church of St. Isaac, when a field-officer riding past suddenly checked his charger, and called out in an imperious tone, which effectually put an end to the Pole's chequered reveries, "Lieutenant Klapka! Hola!

Lieutenant Klapka!" The young officer started indignantly at the rough summons, and a flush of momentary indignation suffused his usually pale face; but soon remembering that instead of being a wealthy magnate of Poland, he was a poor subaltern in a Russian corps, he approached his colonel, and made the customary salute. "What a moon-gazing dolt you are, Lieutenant!" growled out the gruff veteran, with all that reckless disregard for the wounded feelings of others which is habitual to the Muscovites, as well as to other Orientals. The Pole bit his lips, and the Colonel continued, as he drew some papers from his sabretasch, "Carry these despatches to General Annenkoff, Lieutenant; you'll find him at the Passport-office; but be quick, or the bureau will be shut. What were you thinking of, that you went blundering along the road, like the jade in the *Somnambula*, sleep-walking in broad daylight, and omitting to salute your colonel? Do you think, because you are a count, such conduct must pass unnoticed? Better men than you have been degraded to the ranks for less; and if I chose to report you for want of respect, we should see how much the Minister-at-War would care for the coronet of Count Klapka."

"You have said enough, Colonel Androsky, and more than enough!" answered the Pole, steadily fixing his eyes on the visage of the bullying commander; "you are my colonel, it is true, but that fact gives you no right to insult me under colour of a reprimand. As for your threats of complaining to the Minister, they come somewhat strangely from the officer who last year sold to Minskoi the Jew eighty of the Emperor's horses, and who has drawn for years the pay and forage of a regiment kept up at half its nominal number. I will take your despatches to the General. Have you any further instructions?"

"Not I; take care of yourself," grumbled the commander, huskily, as he knit his heavy brows and rode slowly away. Klapka's curling lip showed that he both understood the implied menace and disdained it; and after watching the bulky form of the colonel disappear down the avenue, turned on his heel, and walked towards the great square, muttering to himself, "There is no lack of ill-will in yonder rascal; if his power were equal to his love of mischief, I should not pass a week without some evil happening to me. It is strange, too, that he should hate me as he does, merely because I am a Polish noble, and *he* the son of a Russian brandy contractor." Klapka soon arrived at the

Passport-office, where his uniform procured him a ready admission, and passing through a corridor half filled with yawning policemen in green coats, he entered an ante-chamber which led into a larger saloon, in which several generals in uniform were seated before a table strewed with books and papers, and at which two clerks were writing. One or two Germans or Frenchmen, dressed in plain clothes, were waiting near the table for their turn of audience, and as Klapka entered, a *huissier*, in a most judicial suit of sable, led up one of the petitioners to the board, where he, having been asked several questions by a peculiarly uncivil old general, (the responses to which the clerks transcribed on loose sheets of paper, and afterwards demurely copied into ledgers), received the desired permission to quit the dominions of the Czar, about the greatest boon to *any* alien, one would think, which that potentate could by possibility bestow.

Klapka stepped forward and delivered his despatches to General Annenkoff, who glanced at them, and laying them down upon the table, notified the *congé* of the messenger by a nod. The Pole was in the act of quitting the room, when to his surprise he caught sight of the Englishman, Mark Forster, who was sitting in the corner of the ante-chamber, with a face expressive of disgust and indignation, and occasionally trying to edge his way into the bureau, a proceeding invariably prevented by some grave *huissier* or arbitrary gendarme.

"What is the matter, Mark?" asked Klapka, rapidly, in French; "have you been here long?"

"Seven hours!" answered Mark; "seven mortal hours, as I am an honest man. That confounded clock in the next room, whose ticking reminds me of one of the tortures which the Inquisition used to inflict, it is so wearisome, has struck the hour seven times since I first graced this wretched den."

"But why did you not go away?" asked the Pole, with some amusement.

"I could not bear to put off the evil day," answered Mark, in a serio-comic tone; "I have a regard for my sanity, and your official formalities in this country bid fair to endanger it. But gravely speaking, I did not wish to lose a chance. You know the law compels every foreigner who asks for a passport to leave the empire, formally to notify his intention four times over in the *St. Petersburg Gazette*, in order, probably, that if he has run into debt with any of your too confiding tradesmen,

they may have ample time to lodge a detainer. Well, this same precious gazette only sheds its refulgence upon the metropolis for three days in every week, so that the process of advertising necessarily takes ten days?"

The Pole nodded assent.

"Well," continued Mark, who really seemed to forget the tedium of his long attendance in the delight of criticising the regulations of the imperial government, "I naturally do not care to go through the entire process again, and since I am obliged to leave Russia, I want to get my permission at once. Here I have sat since nine this morning, seeing Yankees, Germans and Frenchmen, come in, get their passports, and go out again, grinning and contented, while there seems to be an absolute conspiracy among the policemen to prevent me from having access to the generals."

"It is very strange," rejoined the Pole; who, after musing for a moment, added, "very strange; for of course you have paid them their fee."

"Fee! what fee?" said Mark, looking intensely astonished.

"The fee, the *douceur;* the little present, in fact, that the generals always expect," explained the Pole.

"In the name of all that's mercenary," ejaculated Mark in positive dismay, "who ever could dream of offering a bribe to those consequential-looking veterans in their green uniforms and golden aiguillettes? There's not one of them who is not decorated with as many stars and ribbons as if he were a prince or a paladin."

"You must not come to St. Petersburg to look for paladins," answered Klapka with a smile. Bayard is not by any means the model of one of our military chieftains. Have you been in Muscovy so long without discovering that every functionary has his price. If the bribe be but an adequate one, you may safely slip it into any hand, short of the Emperor's own."

"But surely, in this public manner, to give money to an officer and a gentleman—" Mark began, when Klapka interrupted him.

"How often am I to tell you, *cher ami*, that 'gentlemen' do not exist in Russia. The boor and the noble are alike in their hearts. A gold-laced coat, some knowledge of French and German, a taste for champagne instead of brandy, and the manners of an accomplished dancing-dog at a fair, such are the

proud distinctions which elevate the magnate above the serf. There are no gentlemen in Russia; there were some in Poland once."

"But they are brushing their cocked hats and tightening their sashes!" exclaimed Mark in considerable alarm; "they must be going to leave the office." And the young Englishman jumped up from his chair, and pushing past the officious policeman who tried to stop him, approached the table.

"*M. le General*," said he, civilly, to the nearest of the imposing looking quintette, "I think you have forgotten me and my passport." The dignitary turned his portly person and scarlet countenance towards the daring innovator on time-honoured usages, and replied with a portentous scowl, "There is no time to listen to you to-day, young man. You may return next week." So saying, the padded old warrior twisted up his grey moustache, and waving his fat and bejewelled fingers, made Mark a sign to be gone.

"I came here seven hours ago," said Mark, whose blood was beginning to course like liquid fire through his veins, for like all Anglo-Saxons he was keenly alive to a sense of injustice, "and have seen dozens of foreigners who came long after myself, obtain their passports and depart. Why should I not be attended to as well as the rest?" All the generals rose, their swords and spurs clanking with martial dissonance, and the decorations on their breasts jingling and clashing most superbly. Picking up their hats, they had already left the table, when Mark, exclaiming, "Stay a moment, I see what you want," produced a twenty rouble note, and thrust it into the hand of the officer who had recently repulsed him. The general took the note, examined it, and pocketed it unblushingly, then affixing the necessary signature to a document which lay ready and neatly filled up, on the table before him, rudely flung the passport down at Mark's feet, and strutted out of the room, followed by his brothers in arms and in plunder. "Klapka, you are right!" said Mark; "there *are* no gentlemen in Russia."

CHAPTER VI.

On the evening of Easter Tuesday, the usual intimates of Jacob Petrovich's family circle were gathered once more around the porcelain stove in the great drawing-room. The

master of the house was engaged in a match of that true cosmopolitan, chess, with his old neighbour, Paul Vlad. Anielka was talking in an under-tone to her lover, who was tightening the strings of her harp, and apparently finding the screws very refractory, to judge by the time which the operation evidently required. Katinka was dividing her conversation between Mark Forster and Yanos the hunter, and the daughter of Paul Vlad sat apart, beside a table covered with engravings and albums, engaged nominally in turning over the leaves of a volume of Schiller, neither whose language nor sentiments she could understand, and, actually, in watching the two sisters and their attentive cavaliers with precisely the same air with which a cat gloats over the feeble struggles of a dying mouse. Sooth to say, the gentle Thekla was on that evening in a mood at once so snappish and so full of exultation, that both Anielka and Katinka had given up as hopeless the ungrateful task of amusing or soothing her. The fair blossom of the house of Vlad, never very remarkable for a dulcet temper, on the present occasion exhibited such rancorous spite in the compression of her pinched lips, and yet betrayed so strange a sense of triumph in the light which filled her green eyes, that Mark whispered to Katinka that her friend must certainly have that morning received her first offer, and regretted having refused the suitor. Paul Vlad's manner was, though more guarded, still more unusual. His cunning eyes from time to time shot stealthy glances at his good-natured opponent, and then roved round the saloon with a scrutiny more curious than benevolent; he moreover pricked up his ears, and listened to every distant sound in the quiet street, as anxiously as the fox for the cry of the hounds and the music of the horn; and sometimes, when old Jacob took one of his pawns, menaced a bishop, or placed the king in difficulty, and uttered a harmless laugh of exultation, Paul Vlad would grin and chuckle in a manner altogether unaccountable in a losing player.

Thekla's ears were naturally excellent, and without much trouble she contrived to hear certain scraps of the conversation going on between the lovers, which, to judge by the expression of her features, seemed to amuse her excessively.

"And the result of your application to Count Nesselrode; did it seem of a nature to hold out hopes?" asked Anielka, bending over the harp in such a manner that her dark tresses almost touched Klapka's cheek.

"The Count spoke most kindly," returned the young Pole, in a tone which, low as it was, reached the unfriendly ears of Thekla, "and he promised to speak to the Chancellor of Poland, and afterwards to his Majesty himself, on my behalf, or rather on ours, dearest girl," continued the young man, in a still softer tone, and pressing Anielka's white fingers with a warmth that caused the watchful Thekla to grin diabolically.

Anielka blushed and instinctly withdrew her hand as she replied, "I trust, I have prayed, and I trust fervently that you may not be disappointed. Ever since this dreadful war began, have trembled lest your regiment should be ordered to the south. And if your turn should come, now that our armies are to have more formidable enemies to encounter than the Turks! Oh! it is too horrid to think of! But your petition to the Emperor will be granted, and you will stay with your poor Anielka, my Eugene;" and the beautiful girl turned her eloquent eyes half-inquiringly on her lover's face, as if she doubted whether she had a right to hope for his safety.

"Calm your fears, my Anielka," answered the Pole, affecting to be more confident than he really was, as he saw the glittering tear that began to gem the dark lashes of Anielka's eyes; "his Majesty will relent when he sees the fullest proofs that my father, having accepted an amnesty after the rising of Warsaw, was quietly residing on his estates when he was falsely accused of a share in the great conspiracy of '39. The Emperor will see the hardship of the sentence which confiscated his possessions, imprisoned him for life, and shortened his days by the hardships he underwent in his dungeon. His Majesty will not refuse to make amends for this injustice, nor for that which forced me, two years after my father died at Kiew, to become a common trooper in a dragoon regiment about to march against Schamyl in the Caucasus."

"Where you won your commission at the sword's point;" said Anielka, fondly and proudly.

"Where I became a lieutenant of lancers," repeated Klapka, with a smile; "no dazzling rank for one whose ancestors were wont to rally round the standard of Poland, the feudal chiefs of a thousand nobly mounted cavaliers all bright with gold and gems. But though the lands of the Palatinate will never be again united as the possessions of a Klapka, there is good cause to hope that the Emperor may restore the fief my father held, and then, dearest star of my soul, Anielka's noble brow

shall wear the coronet of a race second to none in my native land."

"My father's consent has been given long ago," said Anielka, with an arch smile; "and mine too!"

"True!" answered Klapka, "and I can never sufficiently honour the generosity and disinterestedness with which my kind old friend received the intelligence that I had asked you to be the blessing of my life. But could I—I, the descendant of unsullied chevaliers—be mean enough to take advantage of his love for his child, and live like a drone upon his bounty? And if I had remained in the army, could I have borne to drag you from garrison to garrison throughout the vast empire, the wife of a poor soldier of fortune, slighted and despised by the insolent dames of governors and intendants?"

Anielka's reply was lost to Thekla, for a ringing laugh from Katinka completely overpowered the murmuring sound.

All women have an intuitive perception of the admiration which a man entertains for them—a power of observation not depending on any ratiocination from the effect to the cause, but as purely instinctive as the knowledge which the pointer possesses of the whereabouts of the game in what our eyes would seem to assure us is an entirely unoccupied turnip-field. Katinka, however, did not deserve much praise for making the discovery that Yanos was in love with her, for the forester was totally unaccustomed to any of the disguises of conventional existence, and his looks of admiration were as unrestrained and explicit as those which a connoisseur directs to a beautiful picture, or the gem of a gallery of statues. One peculiarity, however, distinguished the hunter. The Esthonian, though born a slave in a land of bondage and degradation, had one of those proud and indomitable natures which are occasionally found belonging to individuals at the bottom of the social ladder, and which often produce a terrible effect in those revolutions which at times threaten to upheave and overthrow the firmly-rooted systems which the practice of ages has consolidated. Such was the Cevenol peasant Cavalier, who conquered the best marshals, and defeated the stoutest troops of the Grand Monarque; and fifty other examples might be quoted to illustrate the fact that compressed thought and energy are at least as dangerous and destructive, when they do explode, as compressed gunpowder. If Yanos had been born a Frenchman, he might probably have risen to be a

Murat or a Ney in time of war, or a red-capped chief of the barricades in a Parisian revolution in time of peace. In England, he would just as likely have grown up an unauthorized tribune of the people, a democratic ringleader, a turbulent mob orator, ever forward in riot and tumultuous assembly. But bred up in ignorance and solitude upon the silent shores of the Baltic, under the shade of gloomy forests, and among a stern and taciturn people, the natural independence of the young Esthonian had acquired a melancholy and purposeless bent. Trained in the midst of barbarism and neglect, schooled in the superstitions of Pagan origin which Lutheranism has never been able to eradicate from the Baltic provinces, and surrounded by beings who had scarcely advanced in civilization for a thousand years, Yanos found no adequate field for his extraordinary energies. He might, had his birthplace been a freer country, have been a dangerous citizen under ordinary circumstances, but in a moment of peril could as easily have proved a nation's prop and safeguard. As it was, the crude but innate eloquence with which Yanos was gifted lay slumbering in his breast, like an uncut diamond in some cavern of the Andes; and even his unusual physical strength and dauntlessness merely caused him to be regarded as the best hunter of his country, a forest land where the wild sportsman, daily chasing the elk, or grappling for life and death with the bear and the wolf, feels the ardour and acquires the qualities of a guerilla. The peculiarity which distinguished the air of Yanos when in the saloon of Jacob Petrovich was in the singularly embarrassed look which he, who had never flinched from the most frightful perils, involuntarily assumed. The slayer of savage beasts, the forester who strode through the wolf-haunted glades of the wilderness with the bearing of a king, now looked as sheepish as a schoolboy for the first time introduced into an assembly of full-grown people. There was no disguising the fact, though it would puzzle a critic to say what qualities necessary for a hero the Esthonian lacked, Yanos was *shy*. He had never been in so handsome a room before, never seen women so elegant in manner and so tasteful in dress, as Anielka and Katinka—never entered a home which breathed of the same refinement, content, and luxury, as that of Jacob Petrovich. The thousand little ornaments and toys which we have been so accustomed to from childhood as to see no wonder in; the china, the clocks, the pictures, some of

them excellent copies of the great masters, that hung upon the walls; the engravings and books in costly covers that lay on the tables, were all strange and new to Yanos. And it was in vain that he tried to face the mocking light that sparkled in Katinka's mischievous eyes; in vain that he reminded himself that on the previous day, in his own element of danger, he had been not only the equal but the superior of those whose lives he had saved, and who in their excess of gratitude had striven to kiss the hand that had rescued them. Yanos was unable to persuade himself that he was, or ever could be, the equal of the merry, but educated and accomplished maiden before him; he felt abashed at his own roughness—ashamed of his own strength, as no doubt Hercules did when Omphale and her nymphs so derided his muscular limbs. Love had clipped the lion's claws, and blunted his teeth, and turned his awful roar into a very humble bleat. Yanos was as clumsy and awkward a swain as ever furnished merriment for a lively little puss like Katinka. And mercilessly did Katinka laugh at him, and flout him, and confuse his wandering wits more and more, until having made him feel intensely miserable and degraded in his own esteem at being thus made a jest of by what he had always been taught to consider an inferior animal, her kind heart would reproach her, and the tables would be turned. When this happened, it soon came to pass that Mark Forster, from being highly amused, grew by degrees to look jealous and annoyed, which piece of gullibility had the effect of raising Katinka's spirits to the highest pitch, and she would smile so sunnily on Yanos, and speak to him in such a tone of gentle interest, that the rough hunter would forget his *gaucherie*, and be surprised to find himself conversing unrestrainedly with a creature as unlike any female he had ever spoken to before, as a gold-powdered butterfly to a homely moth. This made Mark gnaw his lip and redden with anger and perplexity, until Katinka, turning towards her English admirer, soothed his jealous feelings with that wondrous tact which only a woman can exercise, and which even among women is far from being an universal attribute. Katinka had as great a love for coquetry as any of her sex; but though she delighted, as girls—the tender, barbarous, gentle, cruel souls! —will delight, in tormenting and enslaving whomsoever she could bewitch by the flash of her bright glances, she was not coldly and callously vain enough to prolong the sufferings she

caused. She was not like those fair ones, more common in France than elsewhere, who like to dissect in public some unlucky heart they have netted, and to hold it up, quivering and bleeding, that the company may inspect its throes with anatomical curiosity. The sight of any sentient thing in pain was certain to be painful to Katinka; and on the present occasion, though really as constant to the Englishman as any young lady with a proper regard for the dignity of woman could be to a young gentleman who had never taken the trouble formally to propose to her, she contrived so adroitly to amuse and interest both her admirers, that Mark regained his usual frank good-humour, and even the clouded brow of Yanos cleared in some degree. All her simple wiles came under the severe, though silent criticism of the sallow Thekla, who looked on Katinka with more envy than before, since Jacob Petrovich's fair daughter had contrived to attract a new adorer, who was said to have performed prodigies of courage in some romantic adventure on the ice of the Neva, which Thekla, in confidence to her usual confidants, her red-haired maid and the wall-eyed daughter of Shernowitz, the saddler in the Gostinnoi Dvor, declared her total disbelief in. The amiable heiress of Paul Vlad had been piqued nearly to frenzy by the prodigality of Katinka in allowing herself two suitors, a fact the more provoking, because Thekla herself had been pining, "in maiden meditation, fancy free," (and very spiteful things those "maiden meditations" are sometimes,) during more years than she would have cared to mention, for the lack of *one* "bachelor." And Yanos was so handsome, and so superior in mien to any of the young herring-sellers or shoe-makers of the market, that Thekla could have willingly surrendered to him her parchment-skinned hand, and her prospect of inheriting the hoarded roubles and imperials in Paul Vlad's strong box, and to see this showy, good-looking, penniless Esthonian, who was as tall and much better built than the *tambour major* of the Preobajinsky regiment, dangling after a simpering wax doll like that good-for-nothing chit, Katinka, was enough to make Thekla cry with vexation! Poor Thekla! And why should we not pity her? Are there not many among us whose sentiments match with hers? Many who grudge to genius its glowworm brilliance, who deny to merit its hard-earned recompence, who sneer at excellence they cannot appreciate, and who love to snatch his myrtles from the patriot, his laurels

from the hero, and his rose-wreath from the poet? Poor Thekla! We have many poor Theklas among us! Old Jacob Petrovich went on steadily with his game at chess, which, like most thoughtful men, he played coolly and scientifically, never losing sight of the one great object of checkmating his antagonist. Charles the Twelfth is said by his historian to have lost every match from a characteristic mania for perpetually moving his king. Jacob Petrovich fell into another error, and could never be induced to make use of his knights, a species of caution which prevented his becoming a first-rate player, and which gave him a marked disadvantage which nothing but his skilful manœuvres in other matters connected with the game availed to counteract. Paul Vlad, who finessed too much, and was generally worsted, did not usually bear his losses with more equanimity than was to be expected from his cynical temper; but on the evening of Easter Tuesday, 1854, he manifested the blandest humour possible, and chuckled as sincerely as old Jacob himself whenever some *ruse* of the old intriguer was foiled by the science of his entertainer. It was clear, or would have been clear to an impartial observer, that Paul Vlad had some inward consolation for his defeats on the chequered board, and scorned the petty revenge of a bitter word or a surly growl at his conqueror. Mark Forster, who was more noteful of passing events than is customary with persons of his buoyant nature, glanced more than once at Paul Vlad with a kind of floating suspicion of some undefined danger, and was also puzzled by the odd vigilance of Thekla's catlike eyes—a vigilance very unlike the sour fixity of her habitual gaze. Mark was not of a distrustful disposition, but he could not divest himself of the idea that there was something more than was altogether natural in the demeanour of Thekla and her parent. The feline stare of Thekla acquired—as he looked at her without her noticing his observation, occupied as she was with Yanos and Katinka—a hidden meaning of menace, half developed, but still threatening. She tossed her head slightly, too, from time to time, and this motion was evidently in accordance with some thought that boded, to one who appreciated the delightful character of the acid vestal, nothing but malice and mischief. But what harm Thekla could do, unless she spread some injurious scandal among the neighbouring gossips, was more than Mark could conjecture. Yet Paul Vlad showed his yellow teeth with so much of the air

of a vicious old fox, and uttered such unpleasant cachinnations over the chessboard, that Mark could not help whispering to Katinka—

"What can be the matter with old Vlad to-night? Would you not say, to look at him, that he was Mephistophiles himself, playing a game at chess with some unlucky Faust, for his soul?"

"My father is no more like Faust than his old companion is like Mephistophiles," answered Katinka, pretending to pout, and then resuming her flirtation with Yanos.

"It is almost supper time," called out Jacob Petrovich in a joyous voice; "give us a song, Anielka, my girl; one of those simple Finnish ballads that I love so well. There will just be time for one song, before I finally beat my old friend here, and then we'll all sit down merrily to supper."

"Ho, ho!" laughed Paul Vlad, in a ghostly tone, that made every one look at him; but all present, except Yanos, were used to his freaks, and could not easily have been astonished by anything he might have done. Anielka swept her white fingers once or twice over the chords of the harp, and then, after a short prelude of a wild and plaintive cast, she began to sing an ancient ballad, well known through all the creeks and bays of both Pomerania and Bothnia, and which, from beyond the memory of man, has sounded alike under the birchen hovel of the Lette and the turf hut of the swamp-born Finlander. It would be difficult to imagine a tune more sadly musical, or a rhythm more mournfully soft, than those of the humble "folk-song" which Anielka had chosen. It was one of those wailing dirges which all semi-civilized races appear to love beyond all more joyful or more elaborate melodies. Such were the strains which rose and fell amid the Druid's reverenced oaks; which echoed over the cairn of Fingal, and the rune-marked tomb of many a Danish sea-king; which rang through the gloomy woods of New England, before the pilgrim fathers trod those rugged shores; and which were sung around the stone of Irmensul by the idolators of Pomerania;—strains melancholy and monotonous as the sigh of the willow and the murmur of the pine. In a wigwam on the western prairies, or beside one of those grey menhirs that start up like petrified giants from the black Breton heaths, beside the watch-fires of the Arab and Turcoman, or among the outcast gipsies of Hungary, you may still hear those touching though barbarous airs, which appeal

to the sable thread that all of us possess, inwoven firmly in the mystic weft of our natures. There are many children of civilization too hackneyed and *blasés* to be affected by the most harrowing lamentations, shrieked forth by the most soprano-voiced prima donna that Italy ever nurtured on thrushs' eggs and nightingales' tongues, but yet who could not refuse a tear or a sigh to the untaught pathos of some peasant minstrel of a benighted land, whether on the banks of the Danube or those of the Shannon. As for Yanos, he was as much moved when he heard the half-forgotten ditty that had been his lullaby in infancy, that in his boyish days he had listened to among the flower-decked arches which were erected at the feast of Lido, the Flora of the Baltic coast, and which he had hummed among the rustling reeds and larch trees which border the great lakes near which he had often lain in ambush for the game, as was Dryden's Alexander by the magic idyll of Timotheus.

The silvery voice of Anielka, her skill on that most poetic of instruments, the harp, and the exquisite feeling which she threw into a ballad, much of whose charm depended on the expression of the singer, overpowered the untutored heart of Yanos, and made tears blind the eyes which usually possessed the piercing lustre of those of an eagle. Anielka was beginning the last stanza just as the mimic combat of the chess-board came to its inevitable conclusion.

"Checkmate!" cried Jacob Petrovich, throwing himself back in his great arm-chair, and laughing like a boy, quite forgetful of harp and harpist in the glee of his victory. Just then Thekla made a slight movement, and turning her head on one side, appeared to listen as intently as a panther that crouches with ears thrown back and stretched out paws, amid the long grass of a jungle. Mark observed the motion, and the expectant attitude, but could not guess the cause. Some footsteps were faintly heard coming down the street; could that be the reason of her starting thus?

"Checkmate!" again said the old merchant.

"Eh?" answered Paul Vlad, with a simulated deafness which he thought fit now and then to assume.

"Checkmate!" repeated Jacob, as with a radiant face and beaming eye he pointed out the position of the pieces on the board. There was a stamping of heavy feet without, a loud knocking at the door, an impatient peal of the bell.

"Just so, neighbour!" snarled Paul Vlad, as every wrinkle of his crabbed face became animated with a smile of devilish mockery; "checkmate!"

Jacob pushed back his chair from the table, and looked uneasily at his late opponent, as if he doubted his sanity. The tread of several persons was heard in the passage, and many voices were half audible in what was evidently an altercation. The last notes of the song died away on Anielka's lips; Katinka ceased to tease Yanos; Mark looked more fixedly than before at Thekla, convinced as he was that some dark mystery was afloat which, whatever its nature, was no mystery to her. Thekla's green eyes wandered round the room with precisely the look of a cat engaged in counting a troop of unsuspicious mice.

Abruptly and violently the door was burst open, and old Yaska, with her grey hair dishevelled like that of a Druidess, and her aged eyes raining tears, rushed into the room.

"O my master! my dear master! hide yourself quickly! O my dear young mistresses!—what will become of them!" she sobbed out, flinging herself down on her knees beside old Jacob's chair, and holding up her trembling hands as if to ward off some invisible danger.

Before Jacob, Katinka, or Klapka, who all surrounded the spot where the nurse was kneeling, could induce her to explain the meaning of her frenzied warning, the open doorway was filled by the figure of a broad, square-built man, low in stature, and of some fifty years of age. This uninvited visitor halted for an instant on the threshold, and gazed as deliberately round the room as a broker in the act of making an inventory of the furniture in an apartment, or a planter seeking an investment at a slave auction in New Orleans. Squat and ungainly in person, with a forbidding countenance, horribly pitted by the small-pox, blood-shot orbs of evil portent lurking under beetling brows, and wisps of grizzled red hair hanging down on all sides from under a low-crowned, broad-brimmed black hat; the stranger's very aspect was of a nature to excite disgust and repulsion. Dressed in a suit of coarse brown cloth, with large riding boots of soft leather protecting his legs, a fur cloak dangling from his shoulders, and large-rowelled spurs at his heels, he resembled some Bohemian or Gallician farmer of the richer class. In his hand was a riding-whip, with which he once or twice struck his booted leg impatiently, while he

stood upon the threshold, apparently waiting till some one should address him.

Jacob Petrovich was the first to recal his presence of mind; he rose from his elbow-chair, and said, mildly, but firmly, "Be pleased to inform me who you are, and by what right you thus present yourself in my house. If you come on business, these are not the hours at which I transact it, and the counting-house is closed. Be good enough to retire, and if you have anything to say to me, return to-morrow."

A coarse laugh, or rather an exaggerated chuckle, was the first reply of the stranger to the merchant's temperate address. Then drawing a letter from his pocket, he held out for Jacob's inspection the square, formal document, to which was affixed an enormous seal, such as are appended to royal warrants, and pointing to some bold, rough characters at the bottom of the paper, said, "Do you know *that* signature, most honourable and respectable Gospodin Petrovich?"

Jacob looked for an instant at the letter, then turned deadly pale, and staggering a pace or two backwards, sank into his chair, with a groan such as a dying sufferer might have uttered on the rack. Katinka flew to her father's side, old Yaska uttered a shower of incoherent lamentations, Anielka, like a lovely statue of grief, sat motionless before her harp, her white and rounded arms still stretched out in the act of playing, and her fingers blended with the golden strings. Klapka and Mark consulted hastily together in an under tone, on the course most proper to be taken with a stranger so presuming, and yet whose very effrontery seemed to announce one armed with no despicable authority. Yanos, less acquainted with the customs which society has rendered imperative, and a more recent guest of the Petrovich family than the other young men, was unable to comprehend the clue of the drama which he had unexpectedly become a spectator of. In this state of perplexity the inmates of the saloon had remained for some seconds, when at length the harsh accents of the intruder again were heard.

"You know me well by name, Jacob Petrovich; I am your master's steward," and the stranger laid a malicious emphasis on the word *master*, "and they call me Hans Muller."

Jacob sat still, his arms hanging over the sides of his chair, and as motionless as if paralysed.

"What proof can you give of being the person whose name

you claim?" demanded Count Klapka; "and if you really are Prince Jargonoff's steward, what is your errand here?"

"No pert remarks to me, young coxcomb," replied the man, doggedly; "I have interest enough, I promise you, to get your gay jacket exchanged for a more sober garb, and your silver sword-knot converted into a convict's chain; nay!" he added, seeing Klapka's heightening colour and menacing brow, "offend me, and it shall be the worse for the dotard yonder, Jacob Petrovich. Come in from the hall, Basil, George, Karl! we must bring these conceited churls to reason."

Four or five tall domestics, in the livery of the great house of Jargonoff, and with silver badges on their breasts, now presented themselves at the door, pushing on one side the merchant's alarmed but faithful servants, who had at first tried to prevent their entry by force, but had been compelled to desist from their interference by the orders of a superior officer of police, who was present with a party of his men. At the sight of the green uniforms and brass-hilted cutlasses of the *plotniks*, Klapka comprehended the uselessness of attempting openly to defy the power of a man obviously both vain and malevolent. He, therefore, curbed his anger, and, as calmly as he could, asked the steward, Herr Muller, the reason of his presence. Muller, the well-known Prussian intendant of Prince Jargonoff, and who was often praised in St. Petersburg as the most skilful agriculturist, and the most scientific improver in Russia, while he was rarely mentioned in private by a serf of his employer's without being loaded with curses, was not long in replying.

"Prince Jargonoff recals his serf," said he; "his Highness revokes the licence which Jacob Petrovich has abused, and instead of spending his time any longer in harbouring foreign spies and enemies of our glorious Czar, the old rascal will be usefully employed on the estate where he was born."

Jacob did not stir, nor did he reply by look or sign. He was stunned by the suddenness of the blow. There was a long, long pause before he raised his head, and looking with a melancholy fondness at the various objects which adorned the room, and which time had endeared to their owner as household genii, mute friends that never refused him a smile of welcome, he murmured, "Heaven's will be done. I had hoped to die here."

An unfeeling laugh from Muller was the only comment of the steward on this complaint.

"My father, my poor father!" cried Anielka, springing from her statue-like rigidity, and flinging her arms round the old man's neck, as she bowed her weeping face upon his bosom.

Jacob's aged eyes were filled with tears, and his chest heaved fearfully as he strove to repress the unconquerable emotion which vanquished his efforts at composure.

Anielka, moved by a sudden thought, rose from her kneeling posture, and, approaching the steward, said in a voice that might have touched even Muller's sordid heart, "You cannot be so cruel, you spoke only in jest; you will not really separate our father from us."

"Not I, my pretty maiden," answered Muller, brutally; "we shall soon teach you that a serf's daughters are slaves from their birth. Calm your silly little heart, young woman. Princess Beatrice wants a lady's maid who can dress her hair, and read French novels to her. After a few scoldings, I dare say you'll be obedient enough; if not, there are other ways of teaching obedience to refractory wenches on the Jargonoff estate."

"Insolent hound!" ejaculated Klapka, half unsheathing his sword, and so fierce was the fire that glanced from the Pole's eyes that the steward recoiled a step, and looked anxiously over his shoulder to his myrmidons.

The gendarmes made a movement. Klapka remembered the utter futility of resistance, and violently forcing his sabre back into its scabbard, he leant against the wall, and drew his hand quickly across his eyes. Muller grew bolder and more confident. "A strange reception this, truly, for a German burgher in the house of a serf of his employer's. I did well to bring assistance with me, I see, and the warning was a sensible one which assured me I should find the rebellious old knave's house full of sturdy young bullies."

"Have I heard aright?" said Jacob Petrovich, rising from his chair, and dragging his tottering limbs nearer the intendant; "do you really mean to drag my daughters away from their home, from their occupations, their girlish pleasures, their maiden hopes, and force them to fill a position for which their education has unfitted their minds. Oh, it would be too bitter. Their soft hands are as fit to wield the stone hammer, as their delicate minds to bear the coarse contact and degradation of a Malarossian village. Oh, take me, and spare them; be merciful, and leave them in their home! I will go with you,

see, this instant. I am strong, I can work; I was only overcome an instant. Yes, I am ready, quite ready. Let me but kiss my girls for the last time, and I will go cheerfully with you, do the meanest work on your farms, be the humblest drudge, and, when I die, I will bless you, and pray for you, Hans Muller, with my latest breath." And the old white-haired merchant actually knelt before the sneering steward, and clasping his quivering hands, looked piteously in his face, hoping to see there some ray of mercy. But Muller's mocking laugh was as pitiless as before.

"Kiss your cherry-cheeked daughters, if you please," said he to the venerable suppliant; "or, if you like to perform the duty by proxy, I, or my son either, will save you the trouble; but keep your sentiment for less tough subjects than Hans Muller! Do I look so very like a fool, that you think me capable of losing Prince Jargonoff the services of two valuable young female slaves? You have been drinking, old fellow, and the brandy has addled your crazy pate. What could you wish, after all, better for that milksop who is blubbering there, than to be maid to Princess Beatrice, who thinks no more of giving a servant a handful of gold imperials than a box on the ear! And, as for the blue-eyed little kitten, we'll employ her in the dairy at the model farm, or perhaps find her a good husband in some stout young boor, or perhaps one of Prince Dhemetri's grooms. You would like that better than work, eh? lazy one!" continued the steward, laying his rough grasp on Katinka's wrist.

Katinka uttered a cry, Mark rushed forward, and but for Klapka, who, perceiving that the hapless family were entirely at the disposal of Muller, and that to aggravate their fate was but a poor act of chivalry, caught him opportunely by the arm, would have inflicted summary punishment on the insolent tyrant. Yaska now interposed, and begged pathetically that her young ladies might be left undisturbed, offering, though she had bought her freedom long before, to go back to the south and be a slave, instead of her darling mistresses. Meeting nothing but derision in reply to this demand, poor Yaska next prayed for permission to accompany the Petrovich family in their weary pilgrimage, promising much obedience and hard work, and invoking every saint in the calendar to bless Hans Muller if he acceded to her petition. To this Hans gruffly replied that Yaska was a bawling witch, that he was not going

to trouble himself as to whether such useless lumber went to Malorossia, or stopped to rot at St. Petersburg, and finally that if the screeching beldame *did* journey with the family, he would take care to provide her with something more profitable in the way of labour on one of the farms, than the useless task of looking after the comfort of two idle girls, whose white hands, he remarked with a sneer, "would soon be as dingy as her own."

"And is there no alternative?" cried old Jacob, wringing his hands in agony; "speak, Gospodin Muller, is there no sacrifice, no concession which will appease the Prince's anger against his serf, and save my daughters, at least?"

"O, yes, there is an alternative, but I had almost forgotten it," returned Muller, drily; "I stay in St. Petersburg for a week, at the Jargonoff Palace, and then return to the south. Pay me sixty thousand silver roubles while I am yet at St. Petersburg, and I will give you a receipt in my employer's name, renew your licence for ten years, and leave you and your daughters to your music and your nonsensical books. Well, you don't seem delighted. Cannot the honourable and enlightened Petrovich produce such a sum?"

"If you could agree to take corn in part payment," suggested Jacob, humbly.

"Corn!" said Muller, scornfully: "my employer's barns and granaries overflow with corn; but to what use is it, since we cannot send it to the stupid English as before? Corn is not money in Russia now."

"I will strain every nerve, Herr Muller," answered Jacob. "I will stretch my credit to the utmost; I will sell my goods, no matter at what loss; I will appeal to my friends to lend me their aid in this hour of difficulty. And I have one old neighbour, at least, on whom I can rely."

Thekla tossed her head, and gave a short, dry cough.

"Who is this paragon of generosity?" asked Muller, carelessly.

"Paul Vlad," answered Jacob, turning to that pattern friend: "Paul Vlad, my good old crony, who will, I know, be as glad to help me in my need as I have often been to help him."

Muller gave a grin. Paul Vlad rose from his seat, leaning on his crutch-handled stick, and with his white beard streaming over his bosom, the very figure for a benevolent, venerable

old man. But no sympathy mingled with the malice that shone from his grey, fiery eyes.

"Not a copeck would I give, Jacob Petrovich, to save you from starvation. Not a coin, the smallest and most trifling, would I bestow on your daughters, if they asked it in rags and barefooted," said he, in a shrill voice. "I hate you all, you and your heretic friends, and your aping the manners of the vile foreigners, and your treasonable want of love for our Emperor. You were never fit company for an orthodox Russian merchant, and so sick am I of watching your daughters' foolish tricks with their pianos and pencils and guitars, which no honest Russian girl ought to know, that though I see you once more the miserable serf you were born, I can hardly help striking you across the face with this staff."

This sudden exhibition of black perfidy and ingratitude absolutely stunned poor old Jacob. Alas, he ought to have known only too well to what revolting heartlessness superstition and envy may lead a narrow-minded being. Thekla now came forward, and took her father's arm. Her green eyes were as brilliant as a snake's; the cat had swelled into a tigress: she looked positively fiendish with hate and jealousy. "Farewell, Jacob Petrovich," said she. "You will humble my father no longer with your superior education and your hypocritical boasts of honest dealing. Farewell, Mademoiselle Anielka; I hope your mistress will give you plenty of cast-off gowns, and perhaps a beating now and then. It will do your proud spirit good. Farewell, Katinka; many a time have I longed to tear out your unmeaning blue eyes, ay, when you thought I liked you; when you have whispered to others that Thekla was a good girl, but a little cross; ah! how little you knew I could have found pleasure in tearing you with my teeth!" And with a snarl like a wild cat's, Thekla turned towards the door.

Paul Vlad walked beside her, and then, halting on the threshold, said, "One word more, Jacob; I want you to know who it was that met Herr Muller a month ago in the Admiralty Square, that told him you were half-ruined, that warned him of your tastes and the company you kept, and at whose suggestion he wrote to Prince Jargonoff for leave to bring you back to the estate. We shall meet no more. Remember on your death-bed that it is to Paul Vlad you owe your sufferings. May you burn hereafter, Lutheran that you are, in undying fire!" And after uttering these words, Paul

and Thekla retired; but so monstrous and glaring was the depravity of soul which the old trader had evinced, that the very gendarmes shrunk back from his touch as from a leper's, and the servants recoiled in horror. Muller alone preserved on his lips a cynical smile.

There was a pause, which was broken by the deep voice of Yanos. "Listen to me," said he, planting himself in front of the astonished steward. "Old men's tears and maidens' prayers move you no more than my hand could move the stone of Irmensul. I will try another plan. I promise you that on the day on which you shall attempt to drag this family from their home, you shall find you have made an enemy who knows how to avenge an insult offered to those whose roof has sheltered him and at whose hearth he has sat. And there are wolves' heads enough nailed upon the trees about Dobritca, and skeletons of bears enough mouldering near Lake Pskov, to prove that Yanos has seldom missed his aim or his blow."

Yanos was one of those men who, diffident and awkward under the ordinary circumstances of an artificial life, start into grandeur and vigour in moments of peril, and seem to expand and dilate into giants to face the coming danger. And as he stood with folded arms opposite to Muller, the steward turned pale, for he read the Esthonian's resolution in his knitted brow and firm lips. How glad was the petty tyrant when his son, George Muller, a red-haired, freckled young man, who had stood among the servants and policemen, and had not been previously noticed, started forward, crying, "Seize the villain directly! Basil! Michael! lay hold of him. It is Yanos, the Esthonian gamekeeper, the slave that ran away from the estate Prince Jargonoff bought at Dobritca, and which I went down to manage. The rascal was drawn for military service, and the Prince had to find a substitute for him; but he'll scarcely escape carrying a musket now."

Yanos shook with passion as he recognised his old persecutor. He turned to Count Klapka, and said in a guttural tone, that was half inaudible with rage, "Lend me your sabre," and advanced his hand to receive it.

But before Klapka could either give or refuse him the weapon, the officers had flung themselves upon Yanos, and grasped his arms from behind. All his strength was too little to shake off the hold of four powerful men, and, after a brief struggle, Yanos sullenly submitted to have his wrists chained

together. The policemen proceeded to remove their prisoner, a welcome prize at a moment when soldiers of such stature as Yanos were in great demand, and Muller, having reiterated his threats of carrying away the whole family if the ransom were not forthcoming in a week, followed his retreating satellites, leaving the lately happy inmates of Jacob's invaded home a prey to dismay, agony, and confusion.

CHAPTER VII.

THE accursed system of slavery which forms the fundamental principle of Russian government, spreads its hateful influence around it with an effect as deadly as that of the upas tree of the poets. Every relation of life, every blossom of the heart, feels its withering blight, and suffers from its unwholesome power. The leper may be healed of his leprosy, the plague-stricken wretch may be cured of his disease, even the brand of crime may be effaced by virtuous deeds and tears of penitence, but the blotch of Russian serfdom clings like a burning canker to millions, whom deliberate wickedness and throned injustice have doomed to hopeless ages of degradation and of woe. Who can reflect on the cunningly devised cruelty, the legalized brutality of the system by which any savage or profligate, born a noble, can trample under foot the wounded hearts and outrage the dearest affections of hundreds and of thousands of innocent but helpless creatures, without feeling his pulse quicken with the generous glow of righteous indignation? Could any man, not a Muscovite, behold an honest, hospitable, and kind-hearted citizen such as Jacob Petrovich, whose only crime was to have seen the light in a peasant's cottage instead of a gilded palace, suddenly, at the whim of a master in every respect his slave's inferior, save in birth, dragged from the home his industry had earned, deprived of the benefits gained by a life of useful toils, and borne away to herd with the besotted and half-human dwellers in a village of the steppe, where the rudest work was the only occupation, and the only relaxation drunkenness, without feeling that instinctive sympathy with the oppressed, which is one of the noblest gifts that God has given to man? And could the dullest worshipper of Mammon among us, the most pedantic admirer of Russian

institutions, the most venal of courtiers, watch without emotion the anguish of two pure-minded and delicate maidens, like Anielka and her sister, when delivered over by the majesty of Legalized Wrong to those whose brutal pleasure it was to wound their refined feelings, and crush down their noble natures, insulted and sullied, into the mire of shame and degradation?

The most passive of Quakers, nay, Mr. Bright himself, would feel the dull current in his veins warmed into a manlier glow, as he gazed on such a scene as Jacob Petrovich's home presented after the visit of the man-stealers. For that man can have a property in man, that human beings, like cattle, can be justly considered the property of others, is a notion too much opposed to common sense for it to be adopted by any casuists more sincere than a handful of Yankee journalists, fresh from the markets of New Orleans. And even Haly and Legree, even the callous dealer and the ferocious planter, have the excuse, that they believed, according to their dark and warped intellects, that a difference in colour justified every enormity, and that the black man was born the natural bondsman of the white. But few are the Virginians or Georgians who would not shudder at the idea that a girl of white skin and delicately reared, without a taint of negro blood, an Anglo-Saxon American, like themselves, should be flogged, and starved, and forced to toil at tasks above her strength, at the bidding of a fellow-countryman. Fraud and wrong are aided in Russia by the law, sanctioned by the pontiff.

The Emperor permits his nobles to steal men, women, and children, from themselves, and decrees that the human being born upon the soil appertaining to *M. le Baron* or *Monseigneur le Prince* shall as completely belong to that baron or that prince as the lambs in his fold, or the fowls in his hen-yard. And in this wanton perpetuation of caste, in this daily and hourly violation of right, the Emperor of Russia makes himself the crowned captain of a band of coronetted robbers, as much the enemies of the world as ever were the exterminated pirates of Algiers and Morocco. The contest between Russia and the West is not a contest of ordinary belligerents, not a duel between rival nations, to be commenced by protocols and concluded amid bland assurances of the distinguished consideration of diplomatists. It is the commencement of a struggle for existence between Muscovy and the West, and between light

and darkness. Napoleon predicted it, and though his foresight was deceived in the details when he declared, that within forty years after his death all Europe would be Republican or Cossack, the fact remains unchanged. Western Europe is not Republican, but it gives the great boons of political and religious freedom, which Russia denies. The policy of Russia, since the Great Peter organized her empire, has been to grow like a rolling snowball, to spread like a gangrene over the continents of Asia and Europe. The march of locusts is less desolating than that of a Russian army; for the next spring the green herbs and fruit trees that the insect has bitten will sprout again, but the territory that the Muscovite seizes becomes a den of slavery for ever.

It is not two centuries since the first Russian ship, built by a Dutch pilot, sailed on the waters of the Neva, and since the first Russian battalion was being disciplined by German officers. How has the pigmy navy of which Peter's own hands helped to lay the first planks, grown since that day! How has the giant empire fattened since the time of the royal shipwright of Saardam! The devourer of Poland, the scourge of Turkey, the conqueror of Sweden, the bloated Leviathan ever advances, menacing India and Persia with one hand, while with the other it threatens the struggling West. O that the spirit which sent the bravest warriors of Europe, seven hundred years ago, to wrest from the Saracens an impoverished city and a sepulchre, would wake anew to nerve the nations to a fresh crusade, a crusade against the Vandals of our own time, whose irruption is far more to be dreaded than any which has ever taken place from the desert or the steppe! "Scratch off the polish of the Russian, and you will find the Tartar," was the bitterly true proverb which we owe to Napoleon. The Tartar advances on Europe, cruel as in the days of Genseric and Attila, but with all the perfidy and plausibility which form the varnish that beguiles the world.

In front of a conquering host of Muscovites gleams the bayonet and glares the torch, while in their rear resound the clank of the chain, and the moan of the slave, and the lashing of the knout.

It needs a strong dyke to stem such an inundation, but the dyke must be built, sooner or later, or the destructive flood will rush in to sweep away in headlong ruin the liberties and landmarks of a thousand years. Girdled in by a line of watchful

kingdoms, with injured Poland among their number, her fleets diminished, her strongholds razed, her interest in Central Asia thwarted and overpowered, Russia may cease to be formidable to Europe, but only thus. Muscovy is like Mahometanism; while she can expand, she will thrive. Fence her in with an iron barrier, resolutely forbid her to absorb fresh provinces into herself, and from that hour her decay will have begun.

The corrupt mass, finding nothing to infect, will gradually decompose and vanish in its own rottenness.

Limit the plague to a circumscribed space, and the plague will die out. If this humble picture of Russian manners, and the Russian system of government, should serve the purpose of adding one stone to the rampart needed to keep out this new invasion of the barbarians with which we, or our children, are menaced, of swelling by one drop the tide which shall wash back the foul contagion of Muscovite serfdom to its native shores, then my wish will have been fully answered, and I shall not have written in vain.

CHAPTER VIII.

Scarcely had Count Klapka risen on the morning succeeding the evening which witnessed the inroad of Prince Jargonoff's hirelings into poor Jacob's peaceful dwelling, when an orderly presented himself, bearing a despatch which commanded the lieutenant to repair to the Minister of War, at his official residence. Klapka obeyed the summons with military promptitude, and after a brief sojourn in the ante-chamber, was summoned by a *huissier* into the cabinet of the minister. The great official looked keenly at the soldierly figure and fine features of the young lancer, who stood, cap in hand, at the door, his close-fitting garb of blue and silver serving to display to admiration the perfect symmetry of the wearer. Apparently, the sight of Count Klapka's clear eyes, and the loyal sincerity which was imprinted on his face, annoyed the dignitary, for he frowned as if displeased, and it was not for some instants, during which he consulted some memorandums on the table before him, that he addressed the young officer. "Your name is Eugene, Count Klapka, lieutenant in his Imperial Majesty's cavalry?" asked the minister.

A reply was returned in the affirmative.

"Your father was Stanislas Klapka, *seigneur* of large estates near Lublin, and claiming to be Palatine of a county?"

"He was!" answered the Pole, with a slightly shaken voice, owing to the emotion which the recollection of his unhappy father never failed to call up, and which did not escape the minister's ears.

"You are naturally anxious, Count Klapka," said the latter, "that a name so well known in Polish annals should not be suffered to be extinguished in obscurity and poverty. You have petitioned his Majesty; and I need scarcely say that no prayer founded on the shadow of a just claim is ever slighted by our illustrious Czar. The Imperial clemency is never refused to the really penitent; and if Count Stanislas were in fact innocent of the charges against him, the Emperor will the more willingly grant the request, and restore the confiscated property of his son. So far, Count Klapka, I am sure you will be pleased and grateful, as is a loyal subject's duty," continued the smiling minister, looking charmingly urbane and philanthropical. Klapka was gratified, and his hopes rose high; but he knew too well the difference between Russian promises and Russian performance to feel entirely re-assured. "I grieve, however, to say," went on the great man, compressing his lips and banishing his smile so completely that he might have sent it to Siberia, "that serious accusations of lukewarmness, of disaffection, and of sympathy with foreign foes, have been made against you. It has been alleged that you have been tampered with by English spies, and that you have been heard to speak irreverently of the sage policy and sacred wisdom of our Emperor. Hush! don't defend yourself," he added, thus cutting short Klapka's rejoinder; "you need no justification besides that of your own conscience and your deeds. Now what does the Emperor do," proceeded the minister, recovering all his beaming *bonhomie* as quickly as he had lost it, "when one of his officers is charged with so great a crime as those laid to your charge? Why, like a paternal sovereign as he is, he gives the accused a fair opportunity of proving his devotion and good faith by some act which shall effectually establish his sincerity and his merit."

"Place me in presence of the enemy!" said Klapka, proudly: "you shall see if I flinch from my standard."

The minister smiled gently. "There are hundreds of thou-

sands of the Czar's children ready to die for him," replied he; "what we ask is not exactly martial courage, but a more intelligent, and therefore a more useful devotion." Klapka looked up interrogatively. "I have not time to explain to you the nature of your new duties," said the dignitary: "you must call at the office of the Minister of Police, in one hour from this time. He has instructions respecting you, and you will soon learn, if you are not already aware, that the Minister of Police is no uninfluential personage in the management of our army."

The bow that followed this speech was in itself a perfectly intelligible dismissal, and Klapka saluted and retired through the ante-chamber, which, as the hour of the War Minister's ordinary receptions was approaching, he found filled with officers waiting for admission to the great man's presence. A motley assemblage indeed was that through which Count Klapka slowly made his way, elbowing veteran majors of infantry, cavalry colonels in sober dragoon uniforms or flashy hussar jackets, aides-de-camp as trim and wasp-waisted as tight lacing and dandyism could make them, bushy-bearded bashkirs in their barbaric finery, and red-trowsered chiefs of irregular Cossacks, all of whom, with Circassian mercenaries in chain-armour, and grave Mussulman Tartars, were jumbled together in the ante-chamber of the important official who had the power of directing their march on Finmark or Caucasus, on the Rhine or the Indus at his pleasure. Against the door was leaning a staff officer, a young and fair-complexioned exquisite, but with a look of that peculiar astuteness which a Russian is rarely without, and which redeemed his effeminate features from the vapid, simpering air so common among the "*lions*" of a London club. "Good day to you, Baron," said Klapka, trying to pass him; when the aide-de-camp interposed his hand, incased in straw-coloured kid, and gently checking the progress of his unsocial acquaintance, said, "*Allons, cher Comte,* one sees you too seldom to permit you to run away so rapidly. Where have you been hiding yourself through the winter? You never appear at the club, and I have not seen you once at Madame de Brouckere's, or the Princess Cheritoff's card parties."

"The club is not the natural lounge for a simple subaltern of lancers; and as for the whist parties, one should be a Crœsus like you, my dear Baron, to be able to afford such costly amusements," answered Klapka, smiling good-humouredly, and preparing to pass on.

"You are a sly fellow, Klapka," rejoined the exquisite, stroking down his blonde and silken moustache with an air of fatuity that Don Juan might have copied; "but I must say you did right to keep that pretty girl near the market-place, hidden away from the sight of any of the civilized inhabitants of St. Petersburg. Of course, if we had found her out earier, your romance would not have lasted so long."

"What do you mean?" said Klapka, half angry and half alarmed.

"Why, the daughter of the old fellow, the herring curer, corn-factor, sugar-dealer, *qu'en sais-je, moi!* I mean the dark-eyed beauty I saw you ogling at the church of St. Isaac a couple of days ago. A pretty creature she was; eyes like a stag's, hair blacker than ebony and softer than silk, a better complexion than the Archduchess Marie's, and such a superb foot and ankle. I've laid a wager of ten thousand roubles with Galitzin that I bring her on the stage four months hence, as accomplished a star of the *ballet* as any mere Russian can ever be."

"Then you confess, Baron Vassilivitz, that you have permitted yourself to play the spy upon my actions, and to dog my steps as if you were a common *mouchard* of the police?" asked Klapka, in a voice that was hoarse and guttural with emotion, and giving the young aide-de-camp a look which, in another country and under a different form of government, would have daunted a bolder man than the elegant Baron.

"Bah!" answered the Russian, with a shrug and a sneer of the most elaborate impertinence; "no one has a right to keep such a treasure of loveliness and grace locked up in a dingy casket, like that gloomy old house near the Gostinnoi Dvor. Such a Peri belongs to the public, and all stratagems are fair when used against the possessor of so peerless a jewel."

"Baron Vassilivitz," said Klapka, with a stern composure more threatening than any of the signs of vulgar anger, "I warn you to be more circumspect in your language concerning a person very dear to me, and in every respect worthy of being named with reverence and propriety. You have only known me for a year, but I scarcely think that you will fancy me to be a man before whom his affianced wife may be spoken lightly of with impunity."

"Most doughty Don Quixote," returned the aide-de-camp, with a low but taunting laugh, "keep your threats for your

barrack-square comrades; they are absurd enough to make them forgive their insolence in their comicality. You, a mere dog of a Pole, a scamp without an imperial in his purse, to dictate conditions to a Russian nobleman and an archducal aide-de-camp! If it were worth the trouble of speaking to his Highness, I could soon show you that my interest is enough to get you sent off to guard the prisoners at Tobolsk, or to have you packed off to Lapland or the Oural mountains. As for the girl, I'll swear she's tired of you already, and will be glad of a richer admirer."

"You shall give me satisfaction for this insolence, sir, and quickly too," said Klapka, going close up to the young man, and speaking in a forced whisper.

"Do you think yourself in France?" asked the Baron, with a shrug that expressed volumes of contempt; "or do you fancy that I am fool enough to fight a duel with *you*. I've no wish to serve you for a target, *mon cher*."

"Perhaps this may make you change your mind," said Klapka, in a voice that, in spite of his efforts to restrain it, echoed through the crowded ante-chamber with a violence that attracted every eye to the altercation. And the Pole, who was half maddened by the insulting nonchalance of the St. Petersburg *roué*, and by the knowledge that Anielka's abode had been discovered and her steps tracked by so profligate a libertine as Vassilivitz, struck the Baron so forcibly with his open hand across the mouth, that the latter staggered back and caught at the wall for support, while the blood gushed from his wounded lips. Mechanically he half drew his sword, while the officers who filled the room surrounded the antagonists with loud ejaculations of wonder and consternation; for it is as rare for a blow to be given in Russia as in the East, among equals; though to see a general cane a field officer, or a field officer drub a subaltern, would cause no amazement to a Muscovite.

"What is all this dispute about? What is the cause of such a quarrel in the minister's very ante-chamber?" demanded authoritatively a white-haired colonel.

The Baron, who had sheathed his half-drawn weapon again, and was leaning against the wall, pale and breathless, with a stain of blood around his trembling lips, made no reply, but fixed his eyes on the floor. Klapka, in a brief but spirited manner, gave an account of the dispute, omitting all mention of Anielka's name, and laying as much stress as he could upon

the insults personal to himself. When men are left to their own unbiassed judgment respecting some simple question of right and wrong in which their own passions or prejudices are *not* involved, their decision is apt to be tolerably just, even in Russia. Accordingly, the murmur which ensued was decidedly in favour of the Pole, while many strong opinions were expressed respecting the conduct of the effeminate aggressor. Four or five officers, indeed, declared that the latter would deserve to be cashiered from the army, if, after the blow he had received, and the provocation he had so wantonly given, he were to persist in his refusal to afford Count Klapka the satisfaction which the latter so reasonably claimed.

"You must fight him, sir!" said a grim old major of *cuirassiers;* "you must fight him, or submit to be branded as a coward."

"Who says *must* to the aide-de-camp of the Archduke Constantine?" said the Baron, looking up with a scowl of rage and malignity. Immediately a whisper ran through the room,—"It is Vassilivitz, the Archduke's junior aide-de-camp!" and as that whisper spread, every brow was cleared, every voice was hushed; the major of *cuirassiers* looked as frightened as a schoolboy detected in playing truant, and shrunk away into the crowd, while the loudest panegyrists of Count Klapka were silent in a moment.

Then the tide turned. The name of an imperial highness at once broke down the barriers of manly fairness and honest impartiality. The disputants were no longer, in the eyes of the bystanders, a noble young soldier and an impertinent poltroon; but by the magic sound of the Archduke's name and the recognition of his satellite, were converted into a poor foreign adventurer contending with a powerfully-befriended and high-born courtier. Numerous voices were now raised in eulogy of the Baron and in reprobation of Klapka's conduct; and the unanimity of the decorated throng was greater by far in praising the favourite of an archduke than it had been in commending the manliness of a gallant young officer like Klapka, whose sad reverses of fortune, as well as the valour he had displayed in the rugged campaigns of the Caucasus, had made his name unusually well known in the Russian service. If the fawning and civil speeches addressed to Vassilivitz had not the effect of taking away the smart of the blow he had received, they at least made his veins tingle with a glow of

gratified vanity which served to replace the courage in which he was deficient. He drew out an embroidered handkerchief, wiped the blood from his swollen lips, and exclaimed, "Count Klapka, you are not worthy of the keen sword of an orthodox Russian. You are an impudent brawler, whom the Archduke, at my request, would instantly cause to receive a severe chastisement. But I will punish you myself. A Russian noble is not to be insulted without the stain being washed out in the life-blood of his enemy. Two of these gentlemen, who will, I am sure, oblige by aiding me in the vindication of my injured honour, will call upon you this evening; and if you will name to them your *temoins*, they can make arrangements for a *rencontre* to-morrow. How say you, gentlemen? Is not my conduct that which befits a man of my rank and position?" A burst of applause was the answer, and more encomiums were lavished on the condescension, chivalry, and courage of Baron Vassilivitz than would have amply remunerated some deed of signal heroism. Two captains of dragoon regiments enthusiastically proffered their services as seconds to the aide-de-camp, while not a word of sympathy greeted the champion of Right against Might, never the popular side in Russia.

"To-morrow, M. le Baron!" said Klapka in a measured tone, but with a glance that froze the blood which, under the influence of flattery, was simmering in the veins of the Baron, and gravely lifting his cap to the company, he strode slowly down the stairs, without turning his head or appearing to listen to the gasconade which Vassilivitz commenced as soon as his foe withdrew. The officers listened to the latter with affected interest, and that they did not follow Klapka's retreating steps by a burst of fierce invectives, gave proof of an unusual forbearance reflecting the highest credit on Muscovite urbanity. Klapka having gained the street, remembered his appointment at the Prefecture of Police, and hastened on to keep it, while his enemy, the foppish aide-de-camp, set off at full speed for his master's palace, fully determined to lose not a moment in procuring Klapka's instant exile to some distant military post in Siberia, in which event the duel would become impossible, and Anielka be deprived of her champion, without the stigma of poltroonery—a species of distinction not coveted in Russia, though less repulsive there than in a land where a higher standard of honour flourishes—being affixed to the exquisite *par excellence*, the refined Gustav Vassilivitz.

Klapka had to wait a long time in the corridor of the Hotel de Police, before he was summoned to the presence, not of Count Orloff himself, but of one of the lieutenants of the secret police, that formidable brigade whose skill in unearthing secrets might well excite the jealousy of the wiliest *socius* whom the Jesuits ever sent forth to ferret out a mystery or penetrate a motive. The bureau of this chief of *mouchards* was a small dark den, whose smoke-dried panels were innocent of having felt the touch of a paint-brush for more than a quarter of a century, and whose homely furniture consisted of a bureau with a curious lock, a desk, two office stools, four chairs, a walnut-wood table, and a nearly red-hot iron stove. The occupant of this delectable chamber was a small, stooping, prematurely bald man, wearing spectacles, and dressed in a suit of tarnished black. Yet Klapka, who had made early acquaintance with the machinery of tyranny by which the Emperor rules his vast possessions, well knew that this mean-looking little man was one of a clique as powerful as the terrible triumvirs of Rome, or the more fearful sectionists of Paris. The lieutenant received Klapka with much greater urbanity than the more pompous Minister of War had done, and when the young Pole was seated on one of those insignificant looking deal chairs, which had borne strange weights, and heard strange confessions, the tutelary genius of the dusky bureau scrutinized his visitor with a keen and luminous glance, which proved that the lieutenant had assumed his spectacles, not as aids to the sight, but as screens, from behind which, unobserved, to watch the workings of the countenances of those who entered the gloomy sphere of his authority.

"Count Eugene Klapka!" said the Argus of the Prefecture, in a voice as soft and humble as that of a petitioner, instead of a dictator; "it will be useless to waste our time in recapitulating and commenting upon what his Excellency at the War Ministry has doubtless told you. It is in your power to render great services to the Emperor, and it is in his Majesty's power to recompense your merits in the manner most agreeable to you. I can safely promise that your lands in Poland shall be restored, your seigneurial rights placed on their former footing, and any other favour in the gift of the Czar bestowed upon you, if you show commendable zeal and discretion in the duties assigned to you."

Klapka bowed gravely. "I am ever at his Majesty's com-

mand," said he, "and in every service which an honourable man can render he will not find me slow or timid, while, if the Emperor grants my petition, he will have an opportunity of at once performing a great act of mingled justice and mercy."

The lieutenant's dark eyes looked over their screen of Brazillian pebble as glaringly as those of a basilisk. He was all unused to hear limitations mentioned and conditions implied, when the question was of any matter relating to the Czar's service. But he had been warned that his present interlocutor had imbibed a fastidiousness most unfashionable in Russia, and when he spoke again it was in the expostulatory tone, half vexed, half pitying, in which an experienced guardian would remonstrate with his silly but well-intentioned ward. "You can scarcely have worn a sabre for years in the imperial army, Count Klapka," said he, "without having learned that the Emperor is the fountain of honour, and that he alone is the proper arbiter in all things which concern the susceptibility or the consciences of his subjects. What the Czar orders, let it jar never so much with your prejudices, is certain to be consistent with all that is right and respectable in morality. But, in short, his Majesty has, as you are probably aware, many Polish regiments so misguided and unhappy, as not to feel that firm fidelity and affection for his sacred person, which ought to pervade the whole of his fortunate empire. You may scarcely be surprised if I tell you, in confidence, that several of these base Poles have actually deserted to the brutal Turks."

Klapka replied briefly that he had heard reports to that effect, but made no comment on the fact.

"It therefore has suggested itself to the sage council of his Majesty," went on the Chief of Police, "that, in addition to the subordinate agents of the government, whom we retain in our pay among the Polish troops, it would be wise to engage the services of some high-born and dashing officer of the Polish nation, who could easily gain the confidence of his countrymen at the seat of war, and, without being suspected, give most valuable information at head-quarters when any project of mutiny or desertion was on foot. I need scarcely say, Count Klapka, that your birth, your talents, and the sympathy which your compatriots entertain for you, point you out as the fittest person to be entrusted with this delicate and important post."

The lieutenant of police meant this last phrase as a compliment, but, to his surprise, Klapka, instead of smirking and looking pleased, sat pale and motionless as marble.

"The duty will be onerous, and not without risk," continued the lieutenant glibly, "and the salary will be proportionably high. You will at once be sent to the Danube, and if you display as much skill in your new duties as you did bravery in the Caucasus, you will ere long receive promotion. You will be sent, perhaps, to perform the same duties at Warsaw, or to report proceedings at Constantinople, or even to the allied camp, where you may, by the exercise of a little discretion, render services which the Emperor will never forget." And the Russian Fouché rubbed his hands and smiled genially.

"I have made up my mind already;" answered Klapka.

"Of course, of course," said the lieutenant, gaily; "but I may as well tell you what your duties and rewards will be if you answer our hopes. You will very likely be sent to London, as soon as this foolish expedition of the French and English is defeated, and you will have ample occupation in worming yourself into the confidence of the exiled Poles and Hungarians, whose secrets you will thus acquire, and transmit to our custody. After three years spent thus, you shall be pushed on in the more ostensibly diplomatic line, made Secretary of Legation at Stockholm, or Madrid; perhaps, who knows, Ambassador at Naples a few years later. And this, with high pay, the restitution of your lands, and the cross of St. Vladimir in prospect, is surely enough to encourage you to embrace your career with enthusiasm."

"I said my mind was made up," rejoined Klapka, firmly.

"No doubt! no doubt! how could it be otherwise?" said the lieutenant.

"How indeed!" rejoined Klapka. "I refuse."

"You refuse!" cried the lieutenant, pushing back his chair with unutterable surprise.

"Totally and distinctly," answered the young Pole, with heightening colour, and resolute eye; "I would die for the Emperor on the field of battle. My blood and my life are his, but my honour I will keep pure. A Klapka can never be a spy."

"You had better not yield to a rash impulse. The Emperor does not love to see his favours refused," said the minister. "Remember that your reward will be princely, your salary will

consist of thirty thousand silver roubles a year, and I am ready to pay you the first year's recompence in advance."

For a moment Klapka was dazzled. Thirty thousand silver roubles! With such a sum as that, joined to his own resources, Jacob Petrovich could easily satisfy the cupidity of the cruel Prince Jargonoff, and remain a practically free, though an impoverished man. Anielka's beauty, the happiness of her father's down-trodden home restored, fortune, rank, and splendour, flashed in one glittering blaze before the young Pole's eyes. In one scale lay wealth, dignity, his estates and position restored, the beloved of his hopes his own; in the other balance was the displeasure of the Autocrat, the despair of the Petrovich family, the hopeless loss of Anielka. But though the man wavered, the Polish patriot and the noble gentleman stood firm. With an effort that seemed to rend his heartstrings, he cast manfully away from him the bright temptation, and, rising from his seat, he set his foot firmly on the ground, as if to crush all his faded hopes and day dreams beneath his tread, and exclaimed in a clear voice, "I answer, as my father would have answered, as any Pole worthy of the name would reply—No!"

"Very well!" answered the lieutenant of police, "you must take the consequences of your obstinacy;" and, as he spoke, he rang a small silver bell. The door opened as if at the pressure of a spring, and an officer of infantry appeared at the head of a file of grey-coated soldiers. The chief of police pointed out Klapka with a wave of the hand. The officer advanced, followed by two soldiers. The lieutenant of police took from a drawer in his bureau two papers, each of which bore the seal and sign-manual of the Emperor Nicholas. Unfolding them, the lieutenant allowed Klapka to glance at their contents. One paper purported to be the restoration of the confiscated estates of the Klapka family, the other document was a sentence condemning Eugene, commonly called Count Klapka, to suffer degradation to the ranks, and in an infantry corps.

"Do you persist in your refusal?" asked the chief of police, when the Pole had had an opportunity of glancing at the contents of these papers.

"I do," answered Klapka, whose lips were bloodless and whose cheek was pale, but whose firmness remained unaltered.

"Then you are degraded; no longer a Count, no longer a noble, no longer an officer. Sous-lieutenant, remove the prisoner, Eugene Klapka, number 559 in your regiment," said the chief of police.

The officer made a sign, and the soldiers instantly seized on Klapka, brutally wrested his sword from him, and bound his wrists together with a cord.

"The Emperor's mercy gives you one more chance!" said the chief of spies, holding aloft the paper which restored to the Pole his estates. Klapka shook his head. The lieutenant thrust the document between the bars of the stove, and held it there until it was nearly consumed, then flung the charred paper on the floor, and crushed the smoking tinder with his heel. He handed the sentence of degradation to the officer, and Klapka, stripped of sword-knot and shoulder-strap, and deprived of all the little marks of his rank as an officer, was led away a captive, and dragged in his manacled condition through the streets to the same infantry barrack where, though he knew it not, Yanos, the Esthonian, was also a prisoner-recruit under the strictest surveillance.

CHAPTER IX.

The allotted week had almost elapsed, and still old Jacob Petrovich consumed his time in fruitless applications to the capitalists of his acquaintance, or sat for hours, silent and desolate, leaning his venerable head upon his enfeebled hands. He had sold such foreign goods as were in his possession at a great loss, but the Russian iron, Russian hides, and Russian corn, in which the principal portion of his savings had been invested, were as unsaleable as the granite of Oural or the ice of Siberia. No Russian vessel could safely drop down the Baltic to bear these bulky cargoes to the rich countries with which the Czar was now at enmity, and though a brisk overland traffic had commenced between Muscovy and the Prussian ports, through which hemp and tallow still, though at much higher rates than usual, poured into England in defiance of the Admiralty, yet still this trade was prohibited to the serf-born broker, whose origin forbade him to enjoy the privileges of the superior guild of merchants. In a longer space of time,

perhaps in a month, when the commercial panic which ever accompanies the beginning of a defensive war, should be a little appeased, Jacob might have hoped to find some dealer duly qualified to chaffer with foreigners, and who might be persuaded to buy his corn and hides at a trifle below cost price. Jacob would have thus gained the means of purchasing a ten years' respite from persecution, and though impoverished and half beggared, would have been able to escape the clutches of Prince Jargonoff, and to provide for the future safety and comfort of his beloved daughters. But in the short period of a week, this was impossible. The English and other foreign capitalists, whose wealth had hitherto given a stimulus to the mercantile transactions of St. Petersburg, and whose good sense and widely extended knowledge had shone out the brighter for the intellectual darkness and narrow craft of the native chapmen, had either left the country, or were unwilling to risk their money in a ship so leaky and rotten as the Empire of Russia. There remained some Greek firms, certainly, but roguery is the natural element of the Hellene, and Jacob knew it was folly to expect that any Chrysippus or Xanthos among these polysyllabic gentry would give him above a twentieth part of the value of the goods he had to sell. As for borrowing money, the practice was too general, and lenders were hunted for in every direction. The Czar was enforcing loans in every possible way, bullying bankers, robbing land societies, wheedling landed proprietors, and screwing every available rouble out of the pockets of his people which force or persuasion could extract. The nobles were borrowing funds to enable them to work their lands, the owners of mines were seeking capital to continue their excavations, the officers of the army were raising money for their outfit and equipages, in anticipation of a long campaign. Every grandee from the White Sea to the Black Sea wanted cash, and Jacob might as well have expected to be helped first at a state banquet as to have *his* wants supplied. Anielka and Katinka were full of tender sympathy for their father, full of anxious apprehensions for themselves. They tried hard to cheer and console poor old Jacob, when he returned, weary and despondent, from his long courses through the city, and strove to smile and speak pleasantly to the aged man, though even his dim eyes could detect the anguish that lurked in those young hearts, lately so free from suffering. And yet

Anielka had her own griefs, the more poignant because they were mingled with a reproachful feeling against one whom she had loved and trusted with all the warmth and confidence of her spotless but ardent nature.

Since that fatal evening, when the steward of Prince Jargonoff had abruptly burst into what was no longer to be the home of Jacob and his children, Klapka had never reappeared beside that hearth where he had ever been a favoured guest. The strange absence of her lover mortified and wounded Anielka deeply; she could scarcely attribute it to a mere heartless desertion, for the noble countenance and the sensitively honourable principles of Count Klapka would rise up in her recollection as if to plead for him, and yet how to account for his absence at this trying moment was a difficulty not easily surmounted. Anielka could easily have discovered the truth, had she been able to persuade herself to ask her sister's lover to inquire of the Pole's fate, but her pride and delicacy revolted at the idea of thus seeking one who had apparently abandoned her at the very moment when the blackness of the tempest of ruin was gathering around her, and the very remembrance of how often she had entrusted her thoughts, her wishes, and her day-dreams to the ear of him who now seemed a monster of perfidy and callousness, added bitterness to her regrets, and effectually prevented her from naming the absent, even to Katinka. Mark Forster came daily to visit his afflicted friends, and proved a warm-hearted and affectionate companion to them in their calamity. He told Katinka openly how much he loved her, and for the first time spoke seriously of his future prospects. Katinka would perhaps in prosperity have teased him, refusing him half a dozen times; as it was, she said Yes, frankly. But she refused to leave her father and sister, nor could Mark, much as he would have wished to see her safe in his own free land, find the heart to urge her to quit those dear and unhappy beings, while Jacob Petrovich, although willingly consenting to receive Mark as the future husband of his daughter, yet shook his head gloomily over the fate in store for Katinka and her betrothed. Even if Katinka had agreed to leave her distressed relatives and return to England with Mark, that alternative would have been a hopeless one. Katinka was bound to Russia by a double chain, as the serf of Prince Jargonoff and as the subject of the Czar. To expect that the

Emperor would consent to her marriage with a heretic alien, to her enfranchisement from villeinage, to her becoming the bride of an enemy, and leaving the Russian shores, would have been to anticipate a quadruple breach of Muscovite law, that is to say, a fourfold impossibility in a case where no bribe could be offered, and no more influential feeling than the imperial clemency appealed to. For the Russian Czar, like the demon in German legends, gives nothing for nothing, and never drives a harder bargain than when he is supposed to be magnanimous. When he visited England his affability won him more popularity than all his well-paid agents had done for years; he enchanted peeresses, and took his hat off more civilly to Greenwich pensioners than he would have done at home to the whole body of the nobles of the empire, with their marshals at their head; he gave a cup to be raced for, and became popular with sporting men. Just so in time of war he sets free a young nobleman whose gratitude may do him good service, and who can be of no possible utility to him as a captive foe; he catches some young naval officers, and instead of knouting them to death, or sending them to hunt beaver in Kamschatka, he fascinates them and feasts them, feeds them on ortolans and Tokay, makes them free of court and opera, and finally sends them home, bewildered by champagne and the smiles of pretty princesses, dazzled and confused, like the talking parrot of the *Arabian Nights* by the mock thunder and lightning, and ready to sound the Czar's praises as long as they can find breath or pens, hearers or readers. Nicholas is a wise man, and knows that it is more easy to cajole John Bull than to intimidate him. So he keeps his threats for the Turk and the Persian, and contents himself with exhibiting a pageant as roseate and unreal as fairyland to the more educated of his English prisoners, and then turns them loose, blind with gratitude, and inflated with vanity, to write, talk, and speechify in praise of the Incarnation of Humbug.

Now Mark Forster was not a prisoner of war, nor a lord, nor a *littérateur*. He could not, therefore, hope for any boon at the hands of the mild-eyed Emperor. And so the week wore on, and the ransom seemed farther off than ever. Katinka began to have a new subject of uneasiness. Mark received a domiciliary visit from the police, in which it was more than hinted that, as he had shown no alacrity in availing himself of his permission to quit Russia, if he did not speedily withdraw

beyond the confines of the Czar's dominions, he would be considered as a spy, and treated accordingly. Katinka, on hearing of this, at once unselfishly implored her lover to provide for his own safety, to leave her to her fate, and to return to England. This Mark steadily refused to do, and he spent his time, as before, in aiding old Jacob's vain search for assistance, and in consoling the sorrows of his affianced bride. But another and more peremptory mandate from the police arrived, and Mark could not disguise from Katinka that in the event of disobedience his imprisonment, or forcible expulsion would probably follow. In this extremity, urged by fears for Katinka's safety, and it being certain that Jacob could never pay the price of his family within the stipulated time, Mark determined to watch over Katinka in the manner best calculated to avert suspicion, and declared his intention of following her to the south.

"No, no, dearest Mark," said Katinka; "you do not know how severely our laws are administered. Do you fancy that you would be allowed to travel unmolested through the length of the empire? You will be compelled to leave Russia either by the Prussian frontier or from the nearest port, and you will very likely have no option as to the place of embarkation. You will be placed on board some neutral vessel, and only released from police *espionage* when you are in deep water."

"Never fear, my own Katinka," replied the Englishman. "I will ask the leave of neither Emperor nor prefect, but will make my way to Kiew if I have to walk barefoot through the snow. You shall not be thrown without a protector into the power of these brutes of Mullers and their tyrannical employers. I will be near, ready to do all that a single heart and arm can accomplish in your behalf, to watch over and guard you."

"Do not expose yourself to danger for my sake, Mark," replied Katinka, with a seriousness which she had never exhibited before the last few days of misery and care. "The laws of Russia are stern, and if you are detected hiding in the country, the knout—"

"Nay, nay, dearest girl, your fears deceive you," interrupted Mark, tenderly. "An Englishman is in no danger of being subjected to such a punishment. Long and dreary imprisonment, not torture, is all I have to apprehend; but if I were to be torn with wild horses in the event of my capture, I would not be frightened from my task. When you gave me your love

and your promise, dear Katinka, I accepted a charge which I should be the basest of beings to desert. Dry your tears, sweet one: in spite of all the heartlessness of Prince Jargonoff, we shall be happy yet."

Katinka wept on, the tears streaming fast between the rounded white fingers of the hand she had pressed to her eyes, and her gentle bosom heaving with convulsive sobs. As Mark knelt beside her, she grasped his hand, and looking in his face with her blue eyes bathed in tears, she said, hurriedly, "Bless you, Mark, bless you. Since you love me so dearly as to run such risks for my sake, save my poor father, save Anielka, save me."

"I will," answered Mark; "trust to me, love. I will be at Kiew before you reach it. Farewell for a short space; but, trust me, you will see me again, whatever difficulties may lie in my path. So farewell, sweet girl, and do not forget that we shall meet again."

So saying, Mark pressed his lips to Katinka's cold cheek, and, fearful lest she should observe how much this parting had unnerved him, clasped her hand convulsively for a moment, and hurried from the house, agitated by a thousand fears, yet firmly resolved to gain the south in spite of all obstacles to so arduous an enterprise.

CHAPTER X.

THE traveller in Russia may often meet with a quaint-looking band of nomades, whose Astracan bonnets of fur, shaggy pelisses, wide eastern shalwars, and roomy boots, proclaim the wearers descendants of those terrible Mongolian and Calmuc hordes which formerly overran Russia, Poland, and Hungary, and whose light horsemen have forayed even in Pomerania. But these picturesque Moslems are entirely oblivious of the ancient glories of Togrul and Xenghis Khan; they have laid aside the bow and spear, and taken up the ell-wand as a substitute; they are simply what the Muscovites call "Dressing-gown Tartars." Natives of the steppes and mountains which form the frontier of Southern Asiatic Russia, these wanderers emerge annually from Kirghis, Kasan, the Crimea, and other conquered territories now appertaining to the Czar, and roam over the more civilized parts of the Empire, vending robes, and

shawls, and fur caps, and warm Tartar boots, and perhaps tea, obtained from some China caravan. They are mostly Mahometans, but among them may perhaps be found a few Christian converts, or a stray Pagan from Daghestan or elsewhere. Almost all of them are subjects of the Czar, though a few natives of Independent Tartary and of other lands in the far east will sometimes join the pilgrimage of their quieter cousins. In some cities, such as Moscow, there is a mosque for their purposes of worship, and a solitary Moollah abides there to chant daily his invitation to prayer, and to read the Koran to a scattered and scanty congregation.

These sons of the steppe use various means of transporting the goods they sell from one district to another. In the far south, camels, pack-bullocks, and rude Turkish arubahs drawn by oxen are employed; while in the north, light waggons, and whole strings of pack-horses, are more commonly to be seen. Altogether the Dressing-gown Tartars are among the most useful and harmless subjects whom Russia numbers. They own great flocks and herds, which graze upon the boundless plains of Russian Asia, and the wool yielded by their own sheep is spun by the adroit fingers of their women into a warm and soft web, in great request for shawls and robes, and somewhat resembling in texture the old home-made tartan and shepherd's plaid of Scotland. The women toil at this manufacture, the men ramble over the empire, as restless as gipsies, but much better employed, and carry to the frozen shores of the Neva the fabrics wrought from the fleeces of Kasan. A troop of these singular people occupied a species of khan in one of the suburbs of St. Petersburg, and several of them were engaged in feeding the hardy little ponies, natives of the same deserts as their masters, which were tethered under the sheds which lined the yard, when Mark Forster, who had been for some hours pacing the streets of St. Petersburg, vainly trying to discover some means by which he might, unsuspected and unchallenged, perform the journey to Kiew, suddenly found himself in presence of this band of wild travellers, who unquestionably possessed the power, if they had but the inclination, to aid his project. Interrogating one of the Tartars who spoke Russian more fluently than the rest, Mark elicited the information that they were to leave the capital in four days, and that they should travel rapidly, as they had sold almost all their goods, and were anxious to reach home in time

to lead the cattle to their distant summer pasturages. This news decided Mark not to neglect the chance so opportunely presented to him, and he at once asked to see the chief of the caravan. He was accordingly directed to enter the khan, where, in a long, low room, and tranquilly smoking his cherry-stick pipe before a large stove, sat the principal Tartar. The chief rover was a stout fellow of forty, with a flat Mongolian face, broad and yellow as a Chinaman's, a scanty beard, and black eyes of remarkable vivacity. He was dressed in a pelisse of black sheepskin and a pair of wide Persian trousers, a high cap of sable lambswool rested on his shaven head, and on his feet were a huge pair of those rough Tartar boots which alone can keep the feet warm in the rigorous winter of Russia. On each side of the stove sat a boy of twelve or fourteen, dressed in the same national costume as their sire, who was thus early initiating his sons into the life of the road and the mysteries of barter. Mark Forster approached the stove, and entered into conversation with the chief of the caravan on the subject of the latter's approaching migration.

"Yes, we are going through the pine-forests and over the bleak steppes once more," said the Tartar; "we have many a league to travel before we see the blue peaks of the Elburz, but it is six-and-twenty years since I left our green valleys on my first journey to the land of the Muscove, and I am so used to the road, that I fancy my spirit will scarcely be able, when I am dead, to rest quietly in Paradise, and give up the old oft-travelled road."

"I, too," said Mark; "I, too, should be glad to make one such pilgrimage. I wish to visit the southern provinces of the empire, and I should be pleased if you would permit me to accompany you."

The Tartar permitted the white smoke from his mouthpiece to curl in spiral wreaths around his wiry moustaches, while he indulged in a long stare at the well-dressed youth who expressed a desire to voyage with a troop of Dressing-gown Tartars.

"You would soon wish yourself back at St. Petersburg," said the chief, at last; "the snow is but half melted on the steppes, the wolves are not yet silent among the fir-trees; the Tartar travels through mire, and hail, and wind; it is not for a delicately-nurtured child of the city to wander with the sons of the rough desert."

"I am hardier than you imagine," answered Mark; "the storms and the wolves frighten me no more than they do yourself. Seriously speaking, I am anxious to make the journey. I would give a thousand roubles to the man who should agree to take me along with his caravan to the south."

The Tartar's dark eye sparkled as the silvery word "roubles" fell upon his ears. Money is as useful to a herdsman of Elburz as to a moujik of Moscow; and here was an opportunity of clearing a handsome sum without much trouble. Yet the nomade directed a suspicious glance to the face of the young Englishman, and said coldly—

"If you want to travel, you need not share the rye-cake of the poor Tartar, nor sleep beneath his humble tent. You have money, stranger, and the Government will furnish you with post-horses, if your passport is proper and sufficient." And the chief darted another distrustful look at Mark.

"But if I have a whim to wander in your wild way, if my taste leads me to prefer the bivouac fire and the camel's-hair tent to the smoky village inn, why should I be baulked of my whim?" said Mark, with a smile.

"We are not in the Attock or in Roum," answered the nomade, puffing volumes of smoke from between his parted lips; "we are in Russia, where there is a police that takes note of travellers. A well-clad citizen would excite as much suspicion if he were to pass through a village along with such as we are, as would give the authorities an excuse for sending him in irons to the capital, unless, of course, he were well provided with papers that proved his good intentions and loyalty to the Czar."

Mark saw that frankness was the best policy under the circumstances. "Hearken to me, my friend," said he; "I am a foreigner."

"I knew it," quietly replied the Tartar; "I have had no dealings myself with the people of Nyemzestan and Franguestan, but I have heard every dialect in the empire, from that of Lapland to that of Taganrog; and I perceived at once, by your accent, that you were no subject of the Czar."

"And I seek," continued Mark, "to visit Kiew. If you will agree to disguise me as one of your tribe, and allow me to go with you so far, I will pay you, not a thousand, but fifteen hundred roubles, half at starting, half on my arrival at Kiew."

The chief of the caravan puffed at his pipe more and more

vehemently, until the tobacco that filled the capacious earthen bowl glowed like the coals of a furnace.

"I will be as cautious as I can," went on Mark, who saw that the Mussulman was mentally debating the feasibility of the proposed arrangement. "I will assume the dress and manners of your people, and keep as much aloof from prying eyes as possible. You have, of course, a general passport for all your tribe. Who will dream of counting your numbers, to see whether there is a Tartar the more?"

"I will tell you one more thing," said the nomade. "You are not only a foreigner, but I am sure you are one of those Franks with whom the Czar is at war. You are going to travel through Russia, that you may afterwards return home and tell what you have seen. Now if I were detected in aiding you in such a project, what mercy could I expect? I have kept my skin unscathed by the knout for forty years, and I have no wish to be flogged to death, I can assure you."

"Have no fears of that," said Mark, earnestly; "my object is not political. I am not devising anything against the Czar. I am going to watch over the safety of the maiden I love, and to protect her from injury, or to die for her." And Mark gave the Tartar a brief account of the misfortune which had befallen the Petrovich family, and repeated his own resolution to perish rather than desert Katinka.

The Tartar puffed energetically at his pipe the while, and occasionally uttered a snort, which Mark rightly interpreted as an inarticulate expression of sympathy and interest. When the young Englishman had concluded, the chief of the caravan cogitated for a moment, and then gravely said—

"You are a brave lad, Christian, and I am sorry for you, and sorry for the old man, and for the little maidens. I have seen this Prince Jargonoff; he is a hard man, and his son Demetrius is a veritable child of Eblis. And we Tartars do not love slavery, and least of all the slavery of our own countrymen. So, if you will pay me the fifteen hundred roubles, and will be guided by me in all things, I will take you with me unto Kiew. Fodda!"

One of the boys started up at the call, and stood respectfully before his parent. The chief uttered a few words in his native tongue, and the boy left the room, and at once reappeared, carrying a cake of dark-coloured bread and a tin canister of salt, which he gave to his father. The Tartar sprinkled the

salt freely on the bread, broke the cake in two, and, eating one portion of it himself, made signs to Mark to partake of the rest. Mark obeyed, and the Tartar said, gravely—

"I swear on this bread and salt, by my beard, and by my father's head, that I and my tribe will guard thee as a brother, O Nazarene, and will treat thee as if thou wert of our faith and of our race. I have taken the great oath on bread and salt; and thou shalt be safer and better befriended, O stranger, under the lowly tents of the roving Tartars, than any prince of Muscovy in his palace of carved stone."

It was then agreed that Mark should return to his lodgings, and selecting a few necessary and portable articles from the bulk of his property, should revisit the khan at nightfall, the chief agreeing at once to provide him a Tartar dress, and to prepare the horde to welcome him. It was further determined that, for the sake of precaution, Mark should that evening assume the costume of the wanderers, and remain among them at their khan for the day or two preceding the departure of the caravan for the south.

CHAPTER XI.

Trumpet and clarion gave forth a flood of martial melody; drums rolled deeply and sternly along the Prospekts and across the bridges, while cymbals clashed and bugles were blown, as twenty military bands filled the busy streets of St. Petersburg with the menacing yet joyous notes of warlike preparation. Twenty battalions of infantry were pouring in massive strength through the city, music pealing and colours displayed. Heavily and steadily the firm grenadiers moved along the streets, the officers with drawn swords and elated looks striding on at the head of their companies, the soldiers, whose blood was and is the cement of the pyramid of Russian power, tramped forward, stolid, fearless, thoughtless, machines of slaughter. The dull roll of artillery, the ceaseless rumble of waggons and tumbrils, shook the vast houses, and made the pavement that bridged the rotten morass on which the city is built tremble as the giant load passed by. There were cavalry in the squares, cavalry on the roads, cavalry in the barrack yards, cavalry pouring like a sea out of the gates. Forests of shining bayonets swept by, making the eye ache that rested on

the sparkling points of steel, the small flags and bright spear-heads of the lancers danced over the squadrons which succeeded each other, like the waves of a rising tide, while the helmets and panoply of the cuirassier brigades flashed back every ray of the feeble sun of spring. Generals surrounded by groups of caracoling staff officers, carriages gay with blazonry, led horses prancing and striving to break from their restraining guardians, orderlies and aides-de-camp galloping recklessly with despatches to the front, and all the thousand accessories and details of modern war, might have been reckoned there. Waggon upon waggon bearing provisions, clothing, stores, for the marching multitude, *caissons* bursting with the hoards of warlike *materiel* they contained, a load as deadly as the cargo of the wooden steed of Ulysses, the ambulances, the baggage cars, moved as rapidly along as the fiery little horses of the North could drag such cumbrous loads. Troops of grim Bashkirs, mounted savages from Siberia, wolfish marauders from the Ukraine, Polish hussars, Russian dragoons, swart Mussulman Tartars, were blended with the sombre, docile, Muscovite infantry, on whose obstinate courage and muscular strength the fabric of the unwieldy empire had been chiefly erected. Various in dress, in tongue, in creed, in complexion, but held together by the vast power of centralizing despotism, the legions of Russia were on their way to battle.

The Northern Colossus was about to try the practical efficacy of that brute force which had threatened Europe for a century. The troops were to march to the South. Surrounding their columns on every side were the moujiks, the ignorant supporters of the Czar, frantically cheering the soldiers, and mingling their shouts with the most fulsome praises of the Emperor, an adulation often blasphemous from the extravagant nature of the praises bestowed upon—what? a lawgiver, like our own Saxon Alfred? a hero, like Napoleon? No; simply a tall, handsome, soft-spoken, adroit man—Nicholas Romanoff. Is it not an instructive fact, that the two least respectable of European Sovereigns, viz., the King of Naples and the Emperor of Russia, should rely so entirely on the blind devotion, one of the lazzaroni, the other of the moujiks, that is to say, of the most animal, most degraded, and most fanatical of their subjects.

The officers of the departing host were flushed with vanity and excitement, for the fairest of the unhealthy beauties of

fashionable St. Petersburg were coughing and waving their handkerchiefs in the balconies, catching cold, it is true, in spite of furs and *chauffeuses*, but encouraging most enthusiastically their late partners at ball and soirée. The very privates, poor, crushed, beaten hounds, half forgot the quarter of a century's drudgery and misery in store for them, and gathered from the shouts of the crowd a vague idea that they were going to fight for St. Vladimir, St. Isaac, and St. Anne, to say nothing of that greatest of saints, the Czar, and that they were to be favoured by miraculous intervention and assisted by spiritual allies. In the centre of a dark column of infantry marched Yanos and Klapka, both clad in the sober garb of Russian foot soldiers, and each bearing on his shoulder the musket of a private. Small trouble had the Esthonian given to the painstaking drill sergeant of his company, who, accustomed by the unsparing blows of his stick to compel recruits to change their slouching gait for a soldierly bearing, was amazed to find that nature and habit had "set up" Yanos to perfection. No military instructor could have improved upon the Esthonian's martial erectness of person, while his expanded chest, his firm and measured tread, and the proud carriage of his head, would have satisfied the most censorious critic. Perhaps a severe Prussian or English martinet might have objected that Yanos was not unintelligent or wooden enough for a faultless automaton, but such a censure would have come under the head of hypercriticism.

In the matter of discipline, however, Yanos was by no means a model. It was not from any natural antipathy to the profession of arms, for the same adventurous spirit that had made the Esthonian a hunter gave him all the qualifications of a warrior. Brave as a lion, animated by a strong feeling of personal dignity, and easily warmed by emulation, Yanos would have been an admirable defender of a country unshackled by the restrictions of caste.

In the French service, for instance, the velvet baton of a marshal might have been as fitly grasped by his strong fingers as by those of Bernadotte or Murat, while in the English army he would probably have won his epaulettes, and died at least an officer, if not a general. But the Procrustean system of the Russian service galled his giant limbs and chafed his fearless nature. Treated as a man, as a sentient compound of body and soul, capable of progression, development, improve-

ment, the Esthonian forester would have respected every rule and ordinance of discipline and order. But, like most men of strong individuality of character, he made but a bad and unmanageable *machine*. Treated but as a living spoke in a wheel of that great war-chariot in which the Czar was to drive triumphantly over the bloody carcasses of the champions of Europe, Yanos seemed to take a pride in defying the petty but vexatious regulations which break the spirit and crush the will of Muscovite soldiers. He had been but five days in the caserne of the regiment to which he was attached, and already he was set down in the black book of the commanding officer as a headstrong and rebellious recruit, not exactly mutinous as yet, but requiring strict vigilance to keep him in subjection. When some nature is found stubborn enough to resist the organisation of the Russian scheme of rule, it is usual for the Czar and his satraps to break that which refuses to bend. But the case was an exceptional one, soldiers were much needed, more needed than the Emperor cared to own, and such a grenadier as Yanos, with thews of iron and a heart of steel, was enough to encourage a whole battalion of dull boors. So the colonel resolved that he should not be knouted, if it could possibly be prevented. And now that the troops were leaving the capital for the seat of war, Yanos marched steadily on among his new comrades, the tallest, finest warrior there.

Many a lady of that fair crowd that swarmed in balcony and at window to see the battalions go by, forgot the gold-laced generals and slender-waisted officers, in gazing after that noble form, that not even the coarse watch coat of grey duffel could disfigure, and admiring that handsome head which towered above the mass of flat Mongolian visages around.

Klapka, on the other hand, looked hopeless and dejected, and moved along an unnoticed atom of that avalanche of fighting slaves. The Pole's elegant figure was disguised by the muffling coat and russet leather knapsack of the common soldier, and as he marched mechanically forwards, with his cap drawn over his brows and his eyes riveted on the ground, no spectator could recognise the high-born Count in the coarsely clad *fantassin*. The sentence which had reduced Klapka to so lowly a condition had stunned his energies. Every prejudice, every habit, every taste, that had grown up in his mind during life, revolted against the duties and the comrades to whose rough contact he was now condemned.

The Polish noble had now become the equal and companion, not only of serfs whose courage was ferocity and whose wisdom was the fox's cunning, but of felons whose crimes were to be expiated, not in the *bagne*, but on the battle-field, and whom the prudent Emperor chose to punish by the bayonet of the enemy rather than by the sword of the law. The highly educated, highly bred gentleman was now the associate of a horde of drunken brutes who had retained the vices, while losing the virtues, of savage nations, and whose mental blindness and depraved tastes made the unnatural union little less hideous than the grim partnership in which Mezentius chained the dead foe to the living captive. Not once had either Yanos or Klapka been allowed to pass the jealously guarded gate of the barrack-yard, and though the Pole had earnestly implored permission to pay one farewell visit to Anielka, or at least to write and acquaint her with the cause of his absence, the request had never reached the ears of any one except the non-commissioned officer to whom it was addressed, and by whom it was contemptuously refused.

Tormented by a thousand fears for the safety of the delicate girl from whose side he had been torn at the very moment when she most needed a protector, Klapka walked in the martial pageant like a man in a dream. At last the streets are cleared, the gates are passed, and the columns debouch into the open country. The railway from St. Petersburg to Moscow bears its quota of troops and cannon, but the great bulk of the army must journey by the high road. Mire and water, and melting snow, soft and dirty, a cold grey sky, from whose clouds peeps forth an occasional sickly glimpse of pale sunshine, such are the most prominent features of the prospect which greets the departing warriors. The bands played on with undiminished vigour, but after a little while a shower of sleet came driving pitilessly into the faces of the soldiers, and immediately the music ceased, and the instruments were enveloped in their shrouds of green baize. The infantry unfixed and sheathed their bayonets, thrust the protecting tow into the muzzles of their bright-barreled muskets, and trudged doggedly on. The dragoons draped themselves in their loose mantles; the aides-de-camp drew their furred pelisses closer around their corset-imprisoned forms; the generals who were lucky enough to possess carriages rolled themselves up in a mass of wrappings, and went to sleep in the corners of their comfortable vehicles,

while those who had not had the forethought or the funds necessary to provide an English brougham or a St. Petersburg Clarence sat on their quiet horses, looking unutterably cold, savage, and discontented. The sleet turned into hail, and the hail into rain, and the rain into snow. Soon the feathery flakes poured down so thickly that a dark haze settled over the dreary landscape. A snowy mist obscured the air, and through the driving showers the cloaked troopers loomed out like huge Centaurs, and the artillery and waggons could only be distinguished as shapeless masses, lumbering painfully along the swampy road. The wheels of the tumbrils ploughed slowly through the stained snow heaps, the horses of the cavalry splashed and floundered fetlock-deep in mud, now and then sinking knee-deep into some miniature quagmire, and the infantry (wet and dirty), tramped sturdily southwards.

On they went for many a mile, and halted only when the short spring day drew near its close, and when the shades of evening joined with the darkness caused by the snow-storm, to blind the eyes that sought to peer along the shadowy road that led to Moscow. There were a few huts and farm-houses near the spot which was selected for the first night's bivouac, and these were at once taken possession of by the generals and staff-officers. A hundred axes were soon ringing on the trunks of the forest trees, pines were felled, and innumerable piles of fresh lopped fir branches were carried from the woods by the soldiers, and flung upon the great watch-fires which had been lighted the instant the bugles had sounded a halt. Whole companies were employed in collecting fuel, and in a few minutes an immense store of boughs and logs had been collected near the blazing bonfires, beside which many mailed cuirassiers and green-clad sharpshooters were drying their wet cloaks, while others were busily constructing the rude ovens which are used by all who camp out on the bleak ground, whether among the stony kloofs of Kaffirland or among the pestilential marshes of the Amazon. Rude gipsy cookery was going on on every side, the classical tripods of poles supporting over the blaze many an iron pot or serviceable camp kettle, from which issued gushes of greasy steam, and which were carefully watched by ladle-bearing soldiers, intent on the performance of their culinary functions. Some *gourmands*, not contented with their rations of hard black bread, pork, and

beans, set off across the fields to try to wire a hare, or perhaps to essay their powers in the art of abstracting some turkey or sucking pig from the sty or the poultry-yard, a welcome addition to their frugal fare. Dragoons were picketing their hardy horses beneath the sheltering boughs of the pine-trees; stores were being rapidly given out by the active satellites of the commissary-general; the rations of the soldiers, and their allowance of spirits, were promptly doled out to the squadrons and battalions; and the glare of the ruddy flames flashed amid the sable fir groves, and made the helmets and breastplates of the horsemen glitter like silver as they moved to and fro through the dusky glades. The snow fell still, though mingled with sleet and rain, and pattered down upon the roaring watch fires, making the green wood hiss and sputter as the unwelcome moisture touched the glowing embers. The thick branches of the pines were loaded heavily with clinging snow, but the broad flakes that reached the wet ground did but shine in sparkling purity for an instant, and then vanished as the fame of the ephemera of talent disappears from the memories of men. Here and there a sentinel paced up and down in front of the quarters of some officers of rank, or a party of grenadiers partook of their humble supper, lighted by a couple of impromptu torches composed of flaming branches of the resinous fir wood, pinned to the earth with bayonets, and throwing their smoky lustre on the shining arms and warlike forms that occasionally emerged from the black shadow of the woodlands. Far off in the distant forest the keen-nosed wolf sniffed the tainted air, and answered by his long drawn whining howl to the shrill neighing of the war steeds in the camp. The windows of the farm-houses were brilliant with lights, and from within resounded the sounds of feasting and merriment, the clatter of plates and glasses, the notes of song and the buzz of conversation, accompanied by the popping of champagne corks, as the generals not disadvantageously replaced the corn-brandy of the soldier by the aristocratic beverage which the vineyards of Epernay, aided by the orchards of Normandy and the rhubarb-fields of the Berri, produce for the delectation of high society in Russia.

The night wore on, and the supper parties of the dignitaries were broken up, and muffled figures, their feet turned to the glowing logs, lay around the bivouac fires, thick as prostrate trees in a felled forest. Pillowed on their knapsacks, the

Pawns of the great Muscovite Chessboard slept soundly enough, and nothing was heard in the camp, except the challenge of a sentinel, the plaintive howl of the hungry wolf, and the sullen answer of the watch-dogs of a farm. The snow ceased to fall, the clouds opened their serried phalanx, and the pale cold moon appeared in the sky, and enveloped the sleepers in a ghastly circle of chilly light that rendered the black gloom of the woods still more dense and dismal, and that enwrapped the unconscious forms that lay around the fires as in a luminous and transparent shroud.

CHAPTER XII.

Marching through ice and snow, struggling with rain and tempest, the army arrived at Novgorod, and halted for a brief space to refresh the wearied soldiers. But short was the breathing-time allowed. The Turk, the despised Turk, was triumphing on the Danube, and the science and prudence of Omar Pasha had foiled the craft of Gortschakoff. How frantic was the rage of the imperialist circles at St. Petersburg! Omar Pasha, a renegade, a Croat who had assumed the turban, a fellow bred a clerk in a public office, had presumed to prove an overmatch in talent and coolness for a veteran general of Russia! Such audacity, such bare-faced impudence, made the orthodox subjects of the Czar, from the rouge-daubed countess to the oily moujik, join in a shriek of indignant horror when trumpet-tongued rumour revealed what the Russian newspapers were not rash enough to tell the truth about. Omar Pasha was defending the line of the Danube with equal skill and resolution; the Christian population were wicked enough not to rise against their rulers, in spite of all the Czar's proclamations, and all the letters of "Anglicanus" in the *Times* relative to the establishment of "that rogues' and pirates' Utopia," a Greek empire; and the fleets of England and France rode side by side in the Turkish waters. Bitter was the resentment of Russian officials and Russian agents. To have been beaten at all was disagreeable enough; but, after all, Narva, Friedland, and Austerlitz, had proved that Muscovites were not invincible; the venom of the sting was, that a Russian army should have been baffled by a born, not a bred, tactician,

commanding a force of those very Mahometans whom the bragging heroes of the Emperor were wont to estimate as very much upon a par with the naked savages of Polynesia. Peremptory orders were despatched to the reinforcements to hasten their march, and after a day or two at Novgorod, the regiment in which Klapka and Yanos were serving recommenced its southward journey, taking the western road by Vitebsk and Mohilew, in preference to the easterly route by Moscow. The snow was by this time nearly melted, although storms of hail and wind were frequent, and the roads were ankle-deep in mud, affording the most desperate toil for the horses of the artillery and waggon-train, many of which perished daily from sheer fatigue. As the march continued, the weather grew warmer: snow never fell on the dreary encampment of the host as during the first days after the departure from St. Petersburg, but still hail and rain alternated with periods of sunshine; the wind blew so violently across the plains, that the movements of the troops were seriously impeded by its fury; and the mud of the roads, partially hardened every night by frost, and liquefied each morning by sun and rain, became of the consistency of glue, and clung to wheel and foot as tenaciously as a quicksand. Under these circumstances, the advance was necessarily very slow; and as weariness and exposure to the elements told upon even the iron sinews of the hardy serfs, the multitude began rather to crawl than to march. All this time the enormous arms of the telegraph, like those of Briareus, were working vigorously, and sending to the banks of the Neva the intelligence of what was passing on those of the Danube. Mounted messengers were spurring across the Principalities; telegas, each with an imperial courier for its occupant, were jolting and bounding along at the full gallop of a team of Ukraine horses; and all these rapid meteors that whirled across the country were speeding to announce to the Czar some tidings of doubt and alarm. Order after order was sent down with fiery haste from the capital to hasten the advance of the army; fresh levies of conscript serfs were hurried from their homes, rapidly drilled, and placed in the garrisons; more forced loans, and compulsory purchases of corn and cattle, went on; more spoliation of banks and land societies took place; and every waggon, horse, house, man, woman, and child, along the southern routes, was placed at the disposition of the generals, with orders to push on at all

hazards. Miracle-working pictures of the popular saints of Russia were sent express from Moscow to the army, and every day these portraits were carried by the black-robed popes along the lines of Muscovite warriors, and held up with much ceremony to be kissed and adored. Corn brandy was liberally dealt out, and the rations of the troops were increased. At the same time the rigour of discipline was not relaxed for an instant; the lash urged on the jaded horse till he sunk dying in his harness; the stick proved itself able to extract fresh exertions from the footsore and flagging soldier. The generals alone felt little fatigue and few hardships. To the mass of the army the march was a period of frightful suffering. No pause could be permitted; the imperious commands that came by every messenger from head-quarters rendered it necessary to save every instant of time, to strain every nerve, but to press on, so as to crush the Turks before the arrival of the tardy succours from the West. And the corruption of the military system reacted cruelly upon the helpless victims of knavish generals and swindling colonels. No orders, however stringent, no considerations of humanity, not even the dread of the imperial displeasure, could prevent the chiefs of regiments from continuing their usual peculations. Most of the corps were far weaker than their nominal strength, but drawing the pay of two or three fictitious companies was not enough to satisfy the greediness of the commanders, and the men and horses were stinted in food, in forage, in caps and shoes, in everything but *brandy* and *blows*. There were robbers in the commissariat, in the staff, among the superior officers of every arm. Stores were sold almost avowedly; cattle and draught horses exchanged for bags of roubles with the crafty sutlers who followed the host like vultures; and few were the colonels who did not filch a portion of the poor soldier's crust to pay their gambling debts, or transmute the frugal dinner of their troopers into some cases of lead-papered champagne for their own banquets. A great proportion of the troops were ragged, shoeless, and scarcely able to limp the allotted number of versts in each succeeding day; dead horses lay along the roads, fed upon by multitudes of carrion crows; sick or disabled men were left behind in every hamlet; the ambulances had ample occupation; the constant use of the stick was the only stimulant that could induce the exhausted recruits to stagger on; yet still

the army plodded doggedly along the road, uncomplaining, sullen, and stupid.

At Mohilow an order reached them, in compliance with which six infantry and four cavalry regiments instantly turned their faces towards Poland, and marched to strengthen the garrisons of Minsk and Warsaw. The rest of the force proceeded southward along the course of the lengthy Borysthenes, and finally reached the strong fortress and walled city of Kiew, in so pitiable a state of exhaustion and neglect, that a period of repose was called for by sheer necessity, that implacable opponent of autocrats. A part of the garrison of Kiew moved rapidly down to Wallachia to assist Prince Gortschakoff, while the infantry of the newly-arrived army was placed in barracks, and its cavalry encamped upon the plains, already white with the tents of a vast body of horsemen, those famous Cossacks, who have been the vain bugbears of Europe for forty years.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE period of redemption was over, and Jacob Petrovich abandoned hope. The fatal morning dawned at last on which the unhappy family were doomed to leave their home. Very early did the old merchant lift his grey head from the pillow on which it had tossed, feverish and restless, through the long night. Leaning on his ebony staff, for he was much shaken and enfeebled by the sorrow which the past week had heaped upon him, the old man descended to the large saloon around whose hearth Muller had found his prey assembled on the evening which witnessed his intrusion. Jacob sat down in his favourite elbow chair, and with a wan smile looked around at the mute friends he was that day to leave for ever. There was Anielka's harp, now covered with dust, and with a roll of music lying across its gilded pedestal; there were the drawings of both sisters, some of them unfinished—alas! when would either of them find leisure or inclination for such delicate labours again! There stood the piano whose ivory keys had so often sounded merrily beneath the active fingers of Katinka; it was open, and her laced handkerchief lay upon it as she had left it on the

night of Muller's arrival. The books and albums disarranged, the silent clock on the marble mantelpiece, the precious china and medallions in the open cabinets left dusty and neglected, the chessboard and its ivory warriors swept away in confusion into a corner, the arm-chair in which his false friend, Paul Vlad, had sat so often by the fireside he had betrayed, all these possessed a speechless eloquence in old Jacob's eyes. They were the ruins of his home. He was one of those men about whose hearts the insensible objects which custom and associations have endeared twine themselves with as tenacious a grasp as that with which the circling tendrils of the ivy embrace the turret or the oak. To rend away those apparently slight chains was to give a shock to his inmost nature that it was no easy task for an aged man to bear. And yet, in the simplicity of his single-hearted paternal love, Jacob would have torn himself from the dwelling which his industry and thrift had earned, and in which every book, every quaint bureau or massive arm-chair, every picture on the wall, nay, every ornament of porcelain or alabaster, was a humble friend whose loss would have grieved him. Jacob would, I say, have quitted his abode and all that made it pleasant, and gone forth in his old age to drudge and feel cold and hunger, and die without a fond hand to smooth his pillow, or close his eyelids in death, and all this without a tear or a groan, or any sign of outward sorrow, if his daughters might have been saved by his sacrifice from all risk of shame and suffering. But this was denied. Such precautions as the old merchant had been enabled to take had not been neglected. Jacob had realized a sum of twelve thousand roubles, of which the one-half had been lodged in a bank, to the joint credit of his daughters, while the remainder was to be devoted to their use in their dreary bondage in Malorossia. The old man's will, by which he bequeathed all he owned to his beloved children, was in the custody of an eminent German firm, whose caution had induced them to refuse to Jacob the loan that would have saved them, but who had willingly agreed to act as trustees for the benefit of his motherless girls. The merchant had several debtors among commercial men, whose obligations were not yet due, or who were for a time impoverished and paralysed by the panic that prevailed, but he felt a melancholy pleasure in reflecting that much of the money which he had saved during his life of useful toil would hereafter revert to Anielka and Katinka. Then

there were stores of corn, hides, iron ore, and timber, which would, in time of peace, regain their usual value, and which the German house that took charge of Jacob's will would undertake to sell at the proper period.

It was some consolation to Jacob to think that if his daughters were fortunate enough to be released from their enforced slavery in the South—an event which might be brought about by the succession of a milder master to the estates of the merciless Prince Ivan Jargonoff, for on mollifying that terrible boyard himself it was idle to count—the two orphan girls might be actually among the richest heiresses in St. Petersburg. The house in which Anielka and Katinka had been born, and in which the family had dwelt so long, was also the old merchant's property. It was unsaleable on account of the terror caused by the war, which had depreciated the value of such possessions to zero; and Jacob was determined that whenever his daughters should return from their captivity on the banks of the Borysthenes, they should find the dear old home, under whose roof their mother had died, unchanged, and every familiar object smiling its mute welcome as of yore. For this purpose, having dismissed the rest of the household, whose sorrow at parting from their aged master and young mistresses said more for the worth of the unfortunate family than the most pompous eulogy could have done, Jacob entrusted the care of his dwelling to the faithful old housekeeper, whose love for Anielka and Katinka was only second to that of the nurse Yaska, and in whose arms his long mourned wife had breathed her last. This good-natured old dame had agreed to remain in the deserted dwelling as its guardian; and it was a comforting thought to poor Jacob, that whenever his children should return (for he could not bear to contemplate the idea that their exile might be eternal), they would find one kind face in the old house besides those of the unforgotten portraits that hung upon its walls. For half an hour Jacob sat musing and gazing sadly about the room, and then the door opened, and his daughters, followed by Yaska, glided into the saloon. Anielka's beautiful face was as colourless as the whitest marble, and she appeared as calm, at first sight, as if she had been actually a statue; and an occasional quiver of her lip alone betrayed the anguish which she strived to hide for her father's sake, while the peculiar, glazed look of her radiant eyes showed that they were exhausted by

long weeping. Katinka looked ill and tired, but still fought bravely against any outward exhibition of grief. All night long she had sobbed upon her restless pillow, while Anielka had passed the greater part of the dark hours upon her knees in prayer. And when the first glimmer of pale light had peeped forth from the eastern sky, Katinka, over-wearied and stupified by sorrow, had fallen asleep, but still murmured complainingly in her slumber, while Anielka stood beside her bed, pallid and lovely as a mourning angel, and looked down pityingly on the fair young blossom which a gust of the wind of misfortune was whirling from its native glades. Unselfish as she was pure, Anielka had resolved to crush down the flood of grief that welled up from her own heart, and to repress every sign of woe, that she might the better be able to cheer and console her father and sister in their common calamity. But when Anielka caught sight of old Jacob's sad face and trembling hands, and saw the feeble show of meeting them with his usual fond and hearty greeting which the poor merchant thought it necessary to make, she flew across the room, and flung her arms round his neck, with such a fearful but involuntary burst of sorrow as it would have made even Prince Jargonoff's heart ache to listen to. Jacob sprang up hastily, and clasping the fainting girl in his aged arms, laid her on a sofa. Katinka knelt beside her sister, wringing her hands in very terror and agony, and old Yaska ran screaming from the other end of the room, where she had been busy with some preparations for the morning meal, and hurried to her nurseling's side. Every restorative at hand, every care that affection could inspire, was used before Anielka evinced any sign of reviving consciousness. Her brow and cheeks were as cold as if it were really the damp of death that had chilled them, and her slender white fingers lay nerveless and icy in the warm hands of Katinka. Her father gazed upon her with tenderness and alarm, and Yaska, while seeking for every available remedy which her experience suggested, implored the aid of every saint whose name she could recollect. Anielka recovered so far as to open her dark eyes, and weakly essay to raise herself. Yaska supported her in her arms, and by degrees she seemed to gain sufficient strength to enable her to distinguish the faces of those around her, and to breathe more freely. As her senses returned, however, she shuddered visibly, like one who has just awakened from some hideous

nightmare of a dream. "Thank heaven, it is not true," she murmured in a low tremulous tone.

"What is not true, dearest?" whispered Katinka, whose light tresses brushed her sister's blanched cheek.

"What I fancied I saw," answered Anielka, feebly, and with an expression of unconquerable horror and disgust; "I thought I was dead, and wrapped in a shroud, and lying on a bier in a poor hut, a hut more miserable than any in the quarter of the 'Black People.' And there were candles burning dimly at my feet and near my head, and a cross lay upon my breast, but there was silence around, and no watchers were near me. I tried to cry aloud, but a heavy hand, as if of lead, pressed upon my heart, and my lips could not move. And then I was in a grave, oh, so damp and cold!"

"No, no, dearest!" answered Katinka, gently, "you are safe, you are with us, with our father and Katinka, here at home."

"Home!" said Anielka, "yes, I am at home, but the place I saw was not home, and this dear old room —" And she looked gladly around her, and then shuddered again, for she remembered what in her brief moment of unconsciousness she had forgotten, that on that morning they were all to bid farewell to their beloved dwelling-place. Jacob took one of Anielka's hands in his, and gazed on her with the most anxious solicitude, a solicitude which lasted even when her strength had so much returned as to permit her to sit up without difficulty. There is nothing so contagious as sadness, especially if the feeling of melancholy be never so slightly alloyed with superstition. In Anielka's dream old Jacob fancied a vague foreboding of misfortune, which moved him more than all his former trials, and which caused him to peer earnestly into his daughter's beautiful face for the signs of some undermining disease, for the hectic spot, or the unnaturally bright eye, those early, deceptive signs which mark the canker in the bud. Old Jacob's blood grew cold as he thought involuntarily, "What if my hopes for the future should be blighted! what if she should never come back from Malorossia!" But he banished the idea as an unwelcome intruder, and really felt comforted when he saw Anielka almost completely recovered, but still tenderly cared for by Katinka, who forgot her own woes in her sister's sufferings. Yaska busied herself in preparing the breakfast, for the time was fast approaching when

the family would no longer be left the arbiters of their own actions. It was a melancholy reunion around the breakfast-table on that fatal morning, and the more wretched that it was one of those occasions on which every member of a circle feels bound to make a sickly attempt at cheerfulness or indifference, to raise the spirits of the rest. In the present case, there was no exception to the rule. Such dismal essays at conversation, such harmlessly hypocritical affectations of partaking of the delicacies with which poor Yaska, like most peasants in seasons of affliction, had loaded the table, have seldom been witnessed, let us hope. Jacob tried to smile and speak hopefully of the happy days yet in store for them. Anielka, vexed with herself for having so signally failed to overpower her feelings, did her best to seem sanguine as to their speedy return to St. Petersburg, and pretended to talk of their absence from home as a mere temporary sojourn, while her aching heart contradicted every word she said. Katinka's eyes wandered incessantly around the room, lingering on all the inanimate things which refined and adorned the chamber, and which she had never prized so much as now, and then she would start like a guilty thing, and dropping her glance on her plate or her teacup, would affect to be exceedingly hungry and unembarrassed. Yaska hovered about the doorway, pressing her apron to her eyes when she thought herself unobserved. And Time moved on with his equal, measured tread, that never slackens nor hurries, whether it brings nearer the rosy dawn of a joyful bridal day, or the ghastly morn that visits the condemned wretch shivering on his dungeon pallet, and calls on him to awaken and die.

Ten o'clock struck, the heavy beats of the massive hammer that swung in a neighbouring belfry seeming to strike on the very hearts of the listeners. The hour was come. A note from Muller had warned the Petrovich family to be ready at ten, and had announced his intention of coming in search of them. Five minutes passed, and then five more. Old Jacob had laid his watch upon the table, and appeared to be counting the seconds as they flew by at racing speed, and yet with such regular swiftness. Not a word was spoken, not a finger moved. Every tick of the large gold repeater was distinctly heard, and the two fair girls and the aged man sat listening with painful attention to the sound, which the fleeting seconds, those minute grains of golden sand that fill the hourglass of

life, and by which, though we heed them not, our existence is measured out, made as they fell one by one into the shadowy gulf of eternity. How slowly, yet how rapidly, did those drops of Time's ebbing life-blood trickle away! Every individual moment expanded into the proportions of a cycle, and yet how quickly did the tiny indicator glide along the dial-plate! It is true that we note not the evanescent duration of seconds, yet this blindness is a mercy. To think habitually of the transition of moments would be as bewildering a task for the mind as it is for the imagination to conceive the overpowering ideas of infinity and eternity. Were such a strain upon the intellect possible, madness could be the only result. Unhappy is the man who is forced involuntarily to count seconds as they flit by. It is only at the foot of the scaffold, beside the bed-side of a dying friend, or when ruin and fortune are trembling in the balance, and one's future fate depends upon the turn of a card, the speed of a horse, or the verdict of a jury, that seconds are appreciated and marked.

So great was the mental anguish which the Petrovich family endured during some twelve or fifteen minutes after the clock had struck the hour, that when a rattling of wheels was heard along the street, and several vehicles drew up in front of the house, it was with actual relief from the painful suspense they had undergone that the merchant and his daughters rose from their places around the almost untasted breakfast. Suspense, at least, existed no longer. There was a peal at the bell; Yaska opened the door, and immediately Muller's hoarse voice was heard calling out to ask if the family were ready. Anielka and Katinka hastened to array themselves in the long travelling mantles and furred pelisses which they had prepared for the journey, while Yaska and the housekeeper carried out sundry packages which composed the modest baggage of the family. There were four light waggons before the door, two of which were laden with champagne, hampers of Bordeaux, and various delicacies for the table, destined for the use of Prince Jargonoff, as well as a most heterogeneous cargo of shawls, Lyons brocaded silks, French novels, new music, artificial flowers, lace, bonnets, gloves, and perfumery, which importations from the West were to gratify the caprices of Princess Beatrice. The third waggon was occupied by old Muller and his son, and the fourth was designed to transport the merchant and his daughters to the banks of the Dnieper.

Each vehicle was drawn by three strong horses of a hardy Cossack breed, and driven by a stout fellow in the gaudy livery of the Jargonoffs.

In a very short time old Jacob and his children came forth, the merchant leaning on his staff, and with his furred cap drawn down over his brow, in which the last few days had ploughed more furrows than all the years that had preceded them. Katinka walked beside her father, affording him the slight support of her girlish arm, and watching lest his tottering limbs should suddenly fail to bear the weight, to which, for the first time, they seemed unequal. For few of us pass by a gradual transition from childhood to adolescence, or from vigour to dotage. An hour of trial nobly supported, a moment of danger gallantly confronted, anything that calls for moral courage and self-control, will at once convert the stripling into the man. An accident, a fit of severe illness, a worldly calamity, transmutes those whom decay has but slightly shaken into infirm and broken wrecks, the shadows of their former selves. Anielka followed, pale but tearless. Yaska, with a pile of cloaks and fur mantles, was already beside the waggon. The housekeeper stood on the door step, trying hard not to cry, and gasping spasmodically from time to time. Muller was in high good humour, for him at least, and had waited five or six minutes without expressing much impatience, but the sight of Jacob's tardy and uncertain gait was more than the steward's equanimity could endure.

"Rascally old snail!" he roared at the top of his hard voice; "what do you mean by crawling along in that sluggish way, and delaying your master's intendant by your slowness? Move quicker, you swindling huckster! or I'll hasten your pace, I promise you." And the steward shook his cane fiercely at the old merchant, who scarcely seemed to see or hear him, so absorbed was he in the grief of this last farewell to his home. The old man was seated in the waggon, and Katinka next took her place, not noticing George Muller, who, with an impudent leer upon his coarse face, had come up to the side of the vehicle, and who had proffered his assistance to help the sisters to mount the rude conveyance.

As with a grin and a grotesque semblance of courtesy, the young man offered the aid of his arm to Anielka, she stepped back and looked him in the face, with such a calm and quiet dignity, rendered still more touching by her mourning gar-

ments and sad face, that the Prussian involuntarily recoiled, and touched his hat, sullenly but respectfully. Anielka assumed her place, and Yaska followed. The spell was broken which had awed the vulgar libertine, and he felt angry with himself and furious with her whose calm grace had awed him into propriety of demeanour. Stamping his foot upon the ground as he turned away, George Muller uttered a savage oath, and inwardly swore that his humiliation before a serf's daughters should be bitterly avenged. He regained his place beside his father, and drawing his hat over his eyes, lighted his ponderous Leipsic meerschaum, and smoked silently and doggedly. The whips of the drivers cracked, and the willing horses broke into a trot. Katinka and Anielka strained their gaze to get a last lingering look at the old house as the waggons rolled quickly down the street. Old Jacob never turned his head, but sat motionless, and apparently unconscious. At first the broad thoroughfares were nearly empty, and the waggons could proceed at a swifter pace than is usual in a great city, but farther on the number of foot passengers increased considerably, and the drivers were obliged to curtail the trot into a walk. When they traversed the Admiralty Square, they found it more than half filled with troops, newly arrived from the Baltic coasts, and about to march against the Turks.

On a platform covered with purple cloth stood the Emperor, as usual in full uniform, and with the grand crosses of several high orders of knighthood ornamenting his broad chest. Behind the Czar were veteran officers of rank, and priests in flowing robes, evidently gathered for some occasion of ceremony. As the waggons halted, and the whole imposing spectacle became visible to the Petrovich family, the Czar, who had been addressing the troops with great animation, concluded his oration. There was a moment's silence, and then a roll of the drums, hollow, abrupt, and startling. In an instant every soldier sank upon his knees, bending low his head so as almost to lie prostrate in his abject humility before the Emperor, while he lifted his eyes with a gaze of awe-struck adoration to the countenance of his sovereign. The banners were drooped to the earth, the officers crouched in the dust, and the troops gazed on the Czar as pagans gaze on their enshrined idol. And then the Pontiff Emperor, slowly spreading out his hands above the heads of the nearest soldiers, in a sonorous voice

pronounced his fervent benediction on the kneeling mass, solemnly blessed them and their holy enterprise, and in language presumptuous enough to have shocked any but the ignorant beings he addressed, invoked the aid of heaven in his and their cause. The drums beat again, and the square of armed men arose. They uttered a shout of acclamation that made the neighbouring buildings resound, and then marched off, radiant and stupidly confident, to their barracks without the walls.

The Emperor mounted his horse, and followed by his glittering staff, rode away. He passed very near the spot where the carriages were waiting till the police should allow vehicles to pass on across the square. His quick glance roved over the waggons, and recognising the Jargonoff liveries worn by the drivers, took note of the occupants of these simple conveyances. The rare beauty of the sisters arrested his attention, and he half checked his horse as he contemplated them. For a moment the eyes of Anielka Petrovich encountered those of Nicholas Romanoff, in which shone a look of curiosity and surprise. For a moment the virtuous, persecuted maiden and the unscrupulous Kaiser looked upon each other, while Anielka's bosom thrilled with the thought that she was in the immediate presence of the powerful autocrat whose word would have sufficed to frustrate all Prince Jargonoff's malignity. She half raised herself, and was in the act of opening her lips to utter an imploring cry for pity and protection to the great monarch before her, when the Czar mistaking her suppliant attitude for one of reverence, returned a gracious salutation to the supposed mark of respect, and, loosening his rein, disappeared in an instant. Anielka sank back again into her seat, and her heart-wrung prayer for aid died away upon her lips in a scarce audible groan. The police allowed the drivers to proceed, and the waggons, advancing at a slow trot, were soon without the walls of St. Petersburg and rolling down the Moscow road.

CHAPTER XIV.

The journey which interposed itself between t. Petersburg and Kiew could not by the most moderate computation occupy l ess than six weeks, even with a frequent change of horses,

which Prince Jargonoff's numerous estates afforded unusual opportunities for obtaining. At Novgorod, at Tver, near Moscow, near Orel, and at Berezna, the prince owned lands which he rarely visited, but which were under the management of bailiffs. When Muller arrived at one of these friendly havens, he was always received with that fawning subserviency which a Russian rarely fails to exhibit towards those from whom he has something to hope or to fear, and was, moreover, enabled to leave behind him his tired horses, and replace them by fresh teams. The monotony of the journey alone would have made it far from agreeable, even to persons travelling on a more cheerful errand than Jacob Petrovich and his daughters. Russia in Europe scarcely contains a mountain, or even a hill, to break the uniformity of its illimitable flats, as level as the plains of Flanders and Lombardy, but wanting the rich vegetation and marvellous husbandry which give an interest, politico-economical rather than artistical, to the vast nursery-garden districts which form the boast of Italy and Belgium. In Flanders, too, if the pilgrim sees no wooded eminences or craggy peaks, he at least beholds numberless Gothic belfry-turrets of the most airy and graceful constructure, cloud-piercing spires, and cities, some of whose most ancient houses have *façades* carved like a cameo. In Lombardy, the hoary towns nestling within their broad-built Roman ramparts; the ruined arches, the venerable cathedrals on which the patient toil of generations was expended, make the traveller forget the glare of the arrow-straight Emilian Way, and the sameness of the rich swamps of rice, flax, and Indian corn. But Russia offers few attractions to the antiquary or the landscape-painter. Her ancient associations are of no value, even to her natives. People go mad about the Greeks and Romans, and mourn over the Parthenon and the Golden House of Nero. Englishmen are not unfrequently quite enthusiastic on the subject of their hardy Scandinavian forefathers, and love to follow in imagination their migrations from Norwegian holms and Danish "oes;" but who cares about the good old days of Russia! It is only a few years since the ancestors of the Muscovites were more than half Pagan, barbarous, unwashed savages; their squalor and their heathenish propensities have descended to too near our own epoch to be mellowed by distance or gilded by romance; and probably the modern Russians take the wisest course when they varnish themselves over with that French polish which

was too flimsy to deceive the eagle eye of Napoleon, forget the past altogether, and start up a bran new, imitative people.

As regards the scenery of the greater part of the empire, it is saddening rather than interesting. Boundless forests of black pine trees are succeeded by measureless plains of corn-land, and these again by pastures as colossally monotonous as Salisbury Plain, which are flanked by some more thousands of square versts of fir-trees, while a huge, winding, slowly-flowing river occasionally diversifies the prospect. Through these dreary alternations of forest and plough-land, the Petrovich family travelled for some seven or eight hours daily; and as each succeeding league seemed to forge a new link in the chain that bound them, their spirits sank, if possible, to a still lower pitch than before, and their involuntary hopes of a return from slavery were crushed as soon as they were formed. Not that the acute grief which had lacerated their hearts on the day which witnessed their departure from the capital had continued in all its poignancy of suffering. The mental nerves, like those of the body, are, by a merciful foresight, unable to endure more than a certain degree or duration of pain. Agony becomes blunted by prolongation, and that which was meant to torture merely stuns. To the pangs of parting from a home so dear and a life so blissful, with little chance of regaining the one or the other of these blessings, had succeeded a less keen but more constant feeling of misery, such as casts a shadow between its victim and the glorious sunshine, and robs the flower of its perfume, the bird's carol of its melody, and the west wind of its freshness. After a day passed in rolling through dark glades, or fields, above whose surface the sprouting corn scarcely showed its myriad heads of green, the train of waggons would stop in the dirty street of some village on the high road, and Jacob and his daughters would be inducted into the same smoky and heated apartment of the wretched inn, as that in which old Muller and his estimable son were awaiting their supper. And let not the word "inn" suggest to the reader a clean, unpretending, rustic hostelry, such as may still be found in some nooks of England, with its sanded floors of white deal, its deep, lozenge-paned, red-curtained windows, its sweet blossomed garden, tidy motherly landlady, and porch clustered over with roses and honeysuckles. Neither let the idea of a trim Rhenish Gast Haus, or of a rural auberge in southern France, present itself to any sanguine imagination. A Mexican posada or an Irish shebeen-house, perhaps—but

no; there is *no type* for a Russian inn. Fancy a dingy, smoke-dried wooden hut, containing some half-dozen rooms, and housing perhaps ten adults, a host of children, and a swarm of domestic animals, poultry, pigs, dogs, pigeons, and a cow. Imagine this delectable hostel to be in perfect innocence of paint, of paper-hangings, of soap and scrubbing-brushes—its temperature that of a vapour-bath—its passages filled with smoke and steam, its floors begrimed, its flock-beds alive with blood-sucking tormentors, its close rooms reeking with the odours of bad tobacco, oil, onions, fat, brandy, and burnt tallow,—imagine this den the rendezvous of all the intoxicated boors of the village, drinking, howling out songs, and stamping up and down with their linden-bark shoes; fancy it resounding with the revelry of men, the squalling or the noisy play of children, the barking, crowing, cooing and clucking, lowing and grunting of its four-footed tenants; add to these horrors those of a cookery whose *chef-d'œuvres* would have sickened a Hottentot, a hag of a hostess, scolding and boozing, a brutal host, a couple of rough lads for waiters and hostlers, and two or three slatternly handmaidens, usually romping on the stairs with the young boors of the neighbourhood,—and you may form a faint picture of what the merchant's unhappy daughters must have endured in such a hideous Pandemonium. To add to these unavoidable discomforts, at these halting-places the sisters were exposed to no trifling annoyances from the rough persecutions of young Muller.

On the road, the only person with whom the family had any communication was the servant who drove them, and who was, like his three liveried companions, a good-natured, harmless fellow enough, who would have been a passive instrument of evil in the hand of his master, but who would never have originated any scheme of wrong-doing, and was civil when left to his own choice. He was a good type of a large section of his countrymen, blindly obedient, but by no means naturally cruel or mischievous. Unprompted, he would not have wantonly trodden on a worm; but at Muller's or Prince Jargonoff's orders he would have perpetrated any act, however shocking, without remorse or hesitation. He had not been commanded to ill-treat his passengers: and, as far as his own opinion went, he rather liked them than otherwise.

George Muller, however, was of a different mould. Accustomed to the half-civilized manners and deficient morality of the serf-maidens of Malorossia, the calm composure with which

the daughters of Jacob Petrovich had repulsed his advances had piqued him deeply. He hated Anielka, whose quiet dignity checked his boorish gallantry, and abashed him in spite of himself. She was too clever,—too superior in mind and refinement, also, for him to keep alive the spark which her remarkable beauty had first kindled in his brutal bosom. But Katinka, who had more of earth and less of heaven in her nature, who was less an angel and more a woman than Anielka, was now the object of George Muller's admiration. He made a bravado of tormenting Anielka with his addresses; but it was more in spite than in love, and he never lost an opportunity of persecuting Katinka. Old Jacob was no fitting protector for two lovely and undefended girls; for, independently of his age, and the benumbing shock his faculties had undergone, at every step that brought him nearer his native village, that hated, dreaded spot of ground to which he was shackled by the chain of soil-bound servitude, his spirit sank lower, and his submission became more abject and timid. The fact was, that by degrees he was forgetting the years of comparative freedom he had enjoyed, and the early lessons of slavery—lessons taught by the gyve and the lash—presented themselves in vivid colours to his memory, and bewildered his reason. He began to consider it a law of nature that there should be a class born to rule and to inflict pain, and another doomed to submit and to endure. His birth had placed him in the latter category, and he bowed his head, cowed and trembling, to the yoke. George Muller was more guarded in his behaviour when Jacob was present; but often did the old merchant pass over without comment insolent jests or compliments addressed to his daughters, both by old Muller and his son, which in St. Petersburg he would have resented with just indignation. Do you blame him for his pusillanimity? Alas! you have never lived a serf on the estate of a Russian prince!

The journey was, as may be supposed, a painful one to Anielka and Katinka. On the twentieth day, at Toula, Hans Muller was surprised at meeting an old acquaintance, Hamed, the chief of a caravan of wandering Tartars, who had left St. Petersburg a day or two before the steward of Prince Jargonoff. Hamed was well known throughout the European portion of the Czar's Empire. He brought tea, Persian brocade, Indian shawls, Siberian furs, and curiosities from China to Prince Jargonoff's palace. Muller had often dealt with him, and entertained more respect for him than for any born Mus-

covite. Accordingly, on hearing that the caravan was bound for Kiew, Muller invited Hamed to travel to the swamps of the Dnieper in company with his own waggon train. The Tartar agreed readily, for the pace of his own cars and packhorses was such as would suit with Muller's rate of journeying; and on the following day the four waggons of the steward and the troop of nomad traders started together from Toula. Hamed, who rode a shaggy horse in front of his cavalcade, flitted around the party like a hawk upon the wing, now chatting in his purest Russian with Muller, now peering at Jacob and his children, and then dropping back to join his own caravan, but never in the same position for five minutes at a time. During a mid-day halt at the hamlet of Ivanofskoe, twenty versts from Orel, where the troop had stopped to rest beneath the dark green boughs of a pine grove, Katinka was sitting beside a little waterfall, where the pure stream came trickling through the hollowed trunks of trees, which, placed in line, formed a sylvan aqueduct, when a Tartar emerged from the underwood so abruptly as to cause her to utter a faint scream. The man, wrapped, notwithstanding the comparative warmth of the day, in a thick pelisse of wolf skins, and with an Astracan bonnet drawn down over his eyes, approached so near that Katinka was about to cry aloud for assistance to the party who were bivouacking in the grove, against one whose appearance and movements were so suspicious, when the Tartar, perceiving her intention, placed his hand so suddenly upon her lips that the cry was checked before it could find utterance. Poor Katinka struggled to escape from the mysterious barbarian, and pushing him from her with her whole force, was about to raise an alarm which would have brought half the loiterers beneath the pine glades to the spot, when the supposed Tartar flung off his Calmuc bonnet and grey pelisse, and it was Mark Forster that knelt at the feet of Katinka Petrovich, clasping her hand, and looking fondly into her face.

"Mark!" exclaimed Katinka, overcome with the joyful surprise, and bursting into tears, "you here? O how glad I am!" And the poor girl sat down on the rocky bank from which she had risen, and cried more bitterly at seeing her lover again than at all the affronts she had undergone from George Muller. It was long before Mark could soothe her, and induce her to compose her nerves sufficiently to enable her to listen to his tale, and hear the hopes which he had formed for the future

At length Katinka became more calm, and the pleasure of seeing one who was not only her betrothed husband, but also a true friend to her afflicted father and sister, brought back all the colour to her pale cheek, and all the lustre to her blue eyes, whose sparkle had been lamentably dimmed since Muller had first made his forcible entry into the peaceful home which his inroad had rendered desolate. For a long time the lovers sat together on the moss-grown bank, talking over the past, while the future blended itself inextricably with the present in their conversation. Mark's plan was a simple one. It was to separate himself from the troop of Tartars as soon as they should all have arrived at Kiew, to remain in that city, in his present disguise, or in some other, until a favourable opportunity for evading the vigilance of the active police should occur, and then to escape with Katinka, her sister, and old Jacob, to the nearest port on the Black Sea, where a small vessel might easily be hired to convey them all to Constantinople, where safety and freedom awaited them. And Mark never seemed to get tired of telling, nor Katinka of listening, to the young man's projects for a happy and contented life in England, how Anielka and Jacob should be established with his old aunt in Cumberland, how Katinka and himself should be married at Carlisle, and how he should become chief engineer of an Irish railway, a post which he had been offered while still at St. Petersburg, and which was to prove but the stepping-stone to something better. And then the young Englishman pressed Katinka to tell him all that had happened in the early part of her journey, and how poor Jacob and Anielka, whom he had not dared to approach for fear of recognition, bore the privations and evils of their exile. Katinka tried to make as light as she could of her own sufferings, but the tears that rebelliously gushed up into her blue eyes when she spoke of the misery of her father and sister, were evidence enough to teach Mark what they had all been forced to endure, and his lip quivered, and tears stood in his bold dark eyes as he heard the artless story which Katinka told. With the tact of a true woman, she touched very slightly upon the persecution which she was exposed to from the libertine son of the steward; but little as she said about young Muller and his conduct, still Mark's Anglo-Saxon blood mantled darkly in his cheeks, and his eyes flashed in a manner that George Muller would have by no means approved of. The shouts of the drivers, who had missed Katinka from the company, and were about to resume their

journey, warned the lovers at last of the necessity for parting. Mark hurriedly clasped Katinka in his arms, kissed her pouting lips, and with a word of encouragement mingling with his farewell, resumed his disguise, and plunged into the wood. George Muller wondered when Katinka rejoined the troop what made her eyes so bright, and gave her blooming cheeks so fresh and rosy a colour.

CHAPTER XV.

When Katinka had, in the fulness of her innocent joy, descanted to Mark upon the happiness which her father and sister would experience on hearing that their English friend had followed them to the South, and was determined if possible to save them, Mark had strenuously urged upon the impulsive girl the absolute necessity for caution. He did not attempt to dissuade her from confiding the secret to Anielka, whose admirable firmness of disposition he appreciated; but he earnestly begged her on no account, for the present at least, to mention to old Jacob his presence or his intentions. He urged that the merchant's benumbed faculties, and the state of vague terror into which he had fallen, were not such as to warrant his being entrusted with the knowledge of a fact on which so much depended, and which could only add to Jacob's mental perturbation, and perhaps lead to a fatal discovery. Accordingly Katinka sought out an opportunity of communicating to her sister the intelligence of the young Englishman's presence in disguise among the Dressing-gown Tartars; and Anielka reluctantly agreed with her as to the propriety of not enlightening Jacob Petrovich upon the subject. It was a hard necessity for both the girls; for, like many maidens who have lost their mothers in infancy, they had been in the habit of confiding their thoughts and hopes to their surviving parent; and to keep a secret from the indulgent old father, who had humoured their fancies and forestalled their wishes so long, seemed at first sight a treason that nothing could excuse. But Mark's arguments were just, and it was impossible even for filial partiality to deny that it would be cruel to add to the aged merchant's distress of mind by informing him that another person was running the most fearful risks for his sake and that of his daughters; while it was extremely probable that the old man would, by his affright, lest the consequences of Mark's defiance of the Czar's authority should be severely visited on

Katinka, actually excite the suspicions of Muller, and cause the detection of the adventurer. At almost every halting-place during the remainder of the journey, Katinka, accompanied by Anielka, would contrive to separate herself unperceived from the rest of the caravan, and gliding among the avenues of the never-failing pine woods, would meet Mark, who was ever watchful for the chance of an interview with his plighted bride; and for a short space half forget her sorrows while indulging in day-dreams for the future. Thus the party proceeded southwards, the long train of packhorses and waggons serpentining slowly across the plains, until the sable masses of forest began to give way to immense steppes, grazed by countless herds, enamelled by millions of wild flowers, and decked with the long and waving grass of spring. In these prairies the climate seemed somewhat warmer than among the fir-woods to the north; and, as the sun had really attained considerable power, no trace of snow was to be seen. On the travellers went across the steppes, where the breeze rustled pleasantly through the long grass, where the bees from a thousand hives hovered around the cups of the wild flowers, where the hum of multitudinous insect life mingled with the bellowing and bleating that proceeded from innumerable herds and flocks, and where the bustard would occasionally start from some still pool beside the road, and rush off as swiftly as an ostrich across the boundless savannahs. Now and then, too, the caravan would wend through some vast meadow of emerald green, whose succulent grass fed a phalanx of half-wild horses that moved in obedience to the screaming neigh and haughty prancing of some noble old steed, whose ample tail streamed forth like a pasha's banner as he galloped around the obedient herd. Frequently these assemblages of savage coursers would number several hundreds of fine animals, who, with manes and tails flying in the wind, would either crop the luxuriant herbage, or career in squadrons over the steppe, bounding along in all the unrestrained freedom and gracefulness of unshackled liberty, and filling the air with their shrill neighings that pealed like trumpet-calls over the smiling prairies. It was curious on these occasions to watch the herdsman, almost as savage in nature and look as the high-mettled animals whose guardian he was, mounted on a powerful half-broken horse, which he sat like a Centaur, a coil of cordage at his saddle-bow, a short, heavy wolf-club swinging beside it, a long knife at his belt, and a tremendous whip in his hand. These strange beings,

whose high wages scarcely compensate them for the fearful fatigue incidental to their trade, and who, living on horseback like the Mongols, watch their herds night and day during the whole summer season, would sometimes ride up to the troop of travellers to ask for news, or to beg tobacco. Then, having filled their smoking-pouches or heard the last report on the subject of the war, they would dash away with a loud yell, cracking their whips till the reports rang like pistol-shots, and follow their charges, keeping a keen look-out for any tawny wolf hiding in the grass to surprise a young colt, or for a bustard which they might pursue and kill with a stroke of the whip. At last the reedy banks of the Borysthenes were approached, and at Brovary, twenty versts from Kiew, the two parties separated from each other, the Dressing-gown Tartars proceeding towards the city, while Muller turned off towards the village of Khopol, a hamlet built at the junction of the Desna with the Borysthenes, and where Prince Menschikoff usually resided. Had it not been for the good nature of Hamed the Tartar, there would have been no possibility of a leave-taking between Mark and Katinka; but the kind-hearted wanderer really took an interest in the young couple, and persuaded Muller, against his original design, to stay a few hours at Brovary for refreshment, by which means a final interview was secured to the lovers. Mark parted from Katinka with the greatest regret; but he attempted to console himself and her with the reflection that he should be within a few miles of the prince's estate, that he should easily be able to devise means to visit her during her sojourn at Khopol, and that he should soon be able to find an opportunity for escaping to the sea-coast, and bearing away the victims of feudal tyranny beyond the reach of their lordly oppressors. With these assurances on Mark's part, and many tears on that of Katinka, the lovers bade each other farewell, and an hour afterwards Muller quitted Hamed and his nomad band, and struck into a cross-road leading to Khopol, which was at a distance of some twenty-five miles to the westward. The actual space of ground between Brovary and Khopol was not great, but the neglected road was so filled with deep mud and intersected with gaping ruts, that the horses could only proceed at a walk, and a halt midway was indispensably necessary to recruit their strength by rest and corn. Poor Katinka was already dejected and unhappy on account of her parting with Mark; and to add to misery, she was subjected to more annoyance from the bru

pursuit of George Muller on that day than on any other. George Muller had been drinking more deeply than usual; he was elated and triumphant in proportion as he approached the estate where his caprices were almost as much unchecked as those of Prince Jargonoff himself; and during the halt he treated both Katinka and Anielka with the most daring insolence. When they started again it was a period of relief to the sisters, whose unrestrainable tears and agitation even alarmed the dulled perceptions of old Jacob, though he but imperfectly divined their cause; and Yaska's indignation knew no bounds. On rolled the waggons over the rough road, the wheels creaking and rattling, and George Muller's drunken voice chanting a Bacchanalian song, until at length a smoother and better kept track presented itself; the horses gladly broke into a trot, while young Muller ceased singing and fell asleep. Just as evening was closing in, the drivers pointed out with their whips the great yellow river, with its marshy and rush-grown banks, the squalid hamlet of Khopol, consisting of about a hundred huts, built of the white porous stone of the steppes, and boasting no other ornament than an Oriental-looking church, with green walls and a copper dome, covered with tarnished gilding, to which the sun gave back its primitive glitter. About five hundred yards from the village stood a great pile of rambling buildings, forming a sort of hollow square, and capped with fifty turrets and pinnacles, on whose gilded vanes, and on a flag that floated from the highest tower, the slanting rays of the sun fell with a blood-red gleam. This was the palace of Prince Ivan Jargonoff.

CHAPTER XVI.

Around a table which exhibited the wrecks of a costly dessert, furnished by the great hot-houses of the castle, sat three persons, whose dress and air announced them as the masters of the Jargonoff palace. They were, in effect, the prince himself, with his son and daughter. The room they occupied was a large and lofty hall, whose ceiling had been painted in fresco by some wandering Italian artist, though the colours were fast yielding under the influence of wood-smoke and the damp ...nate. The walls were panelled with some dark foreign ...d, and several Italian and Dutch paintings, of no small ...t or value, hung here and there, as well as a few family

portraits of nobles in furs and gold lace, or in military uniforms, and of ladies in brocaded silks fringed with ermine. There were no ancient pictures of knights in armour, and dames in stole and wimple, or even of beruffed and velvet-jerkined gallants; no ladies in hoop and farthingale, such as may be seen in so many halls, schlosses, and chateaux, of the West. And yet the Jargonoffs were of an old family enough, as old, perhaps, as the Rohans and Percies, for their pedigree remounted to a traditionary antiquity that few Celts, Welsh, Scotch, Irish, Cornish, Basque, or Breton could have surpassed in genealogic grandeur. But it was only a couple of centuries since the first civilized member of the family had laid aside his barbarism, and given up his belief in the Prophet of Mecca to embrace the creed of the Russo-Greek church. The Jargonoffs had plenty of ancestors; they were no mushrooms; but the fact was, their forefathers were wide-trousered marauders, the descendants of those valiant khans to whom Timour owed his victories, and portrait painters were not very common among the black tents of the hordes whose steeds were picqueted on the Kipchak five or six hundred years ago.

It is a curious circumstance that Russia possesses among her aristocracy scarcely one indigenous family. The Muscovite is born a slave, and a slave he remains, while his master is a foreigner. Almost all the nobles of Russia are Tartars, Georgians, Turks, Poles, Germans, Swedes—anything but Russians. The born Muscovite rarely rises; Menschikoff is an example to the contrary: but the exceptions are few, and the Teuton, the Sarmatian, and the Tartar shake their whips triumphantly over the cowering Sclavonic race. Poor Russians of the genuine breed, ruled by an Emperor whose ancestors were Norse pirates, belonging to the children of German officers and Mongol robbers, how much more deserving of pity than of hate, are those helots, of whom the Czar makes his tools and puppets! The Varangian Emperor and the hireling nobles are the true foes of Europe, and even they are divided amongst themselves. But as for the poor Sclaves (they say their national name comes from *slava*, or glory, but to our ears its very sound smacks of slavery), maddened by drink and fanaticism, or cowed and crushed by severity, who can blame them for the fault of their brutal rulers? Prince Jargonoff was the great great grandson of a Tartar prince, whose father had turned Christian, and who had himself yielded to the dulcet eloquence

of Peter the Great, and permitted his beard to be shaved off by that potentate's own hand. The wealth of the Jargonoffs was great, and under Peter, and Catherine the First, it had augmented, until in every province of the Empire, some estate called a Jargonoff its master. It was not until Prince Ivan, who had received his baptismal name in consequence of the resemblance he bore to the portraits of the Emperor Ivan the Terrible, had succeeded to his dignities, that the prosperity of the family received a sudden check.

Prince Ivan was a man who, if he had been born in the dark ages of Western European history, would have been the model of a turbulent, independent, feudal baron. Two hundred years earlier, he would have been such an obstinate Boyard as the stoutest Strelitzes could not have subdued. In the nineteenth century he was merely a passive obstacle in the path of Russian centralization. He had feelings and principles more at variance with the levelling theory of the Czar's government than with that of Mazzini himself. He regarded the House of Rurik as interloping aliens, while as for the family of Romanoff, which only claims to rule because of its descent in the female line from the bold Dane, Rurik, to Prince Ivan they seemed usurpers of the blackest dye. He had said openly at St. Petersburg, that the Czar's ancestors had served his own forefathers with bowls of milk when they rode haughtily into Moscow, and that the trembling monarchs of Russia had dried with their lips the stains of milk that fell on the necks of the chargers of the Jargonoffs on those occasions. The words were repeated to the Czar, and Prince Ivan was in an honourable exile at Khopol. If Nicholas Romanoff had an enemy on earth, that enemy was Ivan Jargonoff. Had an aristocratic conspiracy been organized, like that which destroyed Paul, Prince Ivan's strong fingers would willingly have passed around the Emperor's throat the handkerchief that strangled his father. Had the nobles, nine-tenths of whom, that is to say, of the territorial noblesse, not of the official "Tchinn," hate the Czar, raised the standard of revolt, Prince Jargonoff's sword would have shone in the van of their tumultuous array. But, as it was, the great landowner remained a discontented, extravagant, half-ruined tyrant, rich in acres, men, women, cattle, and produce, but poor in money, without which civilized medium he could not obtain from abroad the countless objects which his tastes required. The prince was a man of fifty, spare, strong, and bony, with keen aquiline features, an inhe-

ritance from his Georgian mother, scanty grey hair, bushy whiskers, and bloodshot eyes, whose red gleam was fiercer than that of a tiger's orbs. He was dressed in one of those pelisses of sable fur commonly worn by Moslems of high rank, his blue trousers were very wide, and slashed with silver, and round his neck hung a gold chain.

Prince Demetrius, the great noble's only son, was a slightly built young man, with a sallow complexion, brown hair, and a figure so wasted and attenuated by excess, as to seem incapable of supporting its own weight. Dressed in the extreme of Parisian fashion, the emaciated and sickly son offered as great a contrast to his hardy father—whose iron constitution the indulgences of the table had hardly sapped—as the varnished boots of Prince Demetrius did to the warm Tartar buskins of his sire.

Demetrius had been a hanger-on of diplomacy from boyhood; he had been attached to the Russian embassies everywhere, at Stockholm, Naples, London, and the Hague. He had been much admired at Vienna, where he had contrived to ruin his health, and at Paris he had fairly brought himself to the brink of the grave by the dissipations into which Russians often plunge with the desperate recklessness of buccaneers. He had come home degraded, in consequence of his father's disgrace at court, and in a dying state. Yet he drank every day such quantities of wine and liqueurs as flushed even his pallid cheeks, and seemed to know no enjoyment of life save in the paroxysms of some wild debauch. Prince Ivan was proud of his lineage, proud of his Tartar blood, proud of ruling over Russians. Prince Demetrius was ashamed of his barbarous country, not because he appreciated its evils, or cared for its gangrened rottenness, but because he loved to mingle with the polished throng of butterflies that skim the surface of French society, and his savage parentage often exposed him to jests which galled him to the quick. He liked to use the privileges of a Russian landowner, and at the same time wished to be considered a Parisian *viveur*, in all the force of the term.

The Princess Beatrice differed in appearance from both her father and brother. She was very beautiful, or at least she seemed so to those who only noted the exquisite chiselling of her features, and the fine shape of her head, the glossy richness of her auburn hair, and the deep blue of her handsome eyes. But those who observed her more narrowly could scarcely fail to remark in her thin lips, the frequent quiver of her almost transparent nostrils, and the shape of her slightly

receding, though very white, forehead, the seldom failing signs of a cruel and treacherous nature, in which vanity and whim supplied the place of all the warmer and more violent passions. Even the sombre blue of her unquestionably superb eyes had in it something unpleasing, something of the cold lustre that distinguishes the menacing eyes of the hyæna. The princess was richly dressed, but in a sort of fantastic exaggeration of the reigning Parisian fashion. Beatrice had the tastes of the Lower Empire, or of the days of Louis Quinze, in all that regards costume and display. No milliner could sew enough costly Flemish lace, or enough fringes and ribbons, on to a robe of hers to content her, and, even in the depths of the provinces, she took her place every day at the dinner-table, with her father and brother for her only companions, more sumptuously attired than if for a royal banquet. She was as fond of jewellery as of lace, and now as she sat nonchalantly thrown back in a deep arm-chair, her fingers flashed with rings, gemmed bracelets decked her rounded arms, and diamonds sparkled at her ears, on her bosom, and around her neck. She could not bear to leave her ornaments in their *écrins*, even where their blaze was thrown away upon the company. As she half sat, half reclined, in the languid position she had assumed, it would have been curious to have contrasted her half-shut eyes and indolent grace with the mechanical spite and vigour which her fingers displayed in tearing to pieces her valuable scarf of Mechlin lace, and to have remarked the difference between those fingers themselves, taper and pliant, but hard, colourless, and with dull nails, whose opaque shell never showed a rosy tinge from the youthful blood within, and the plump white arm to which they belonged, and which had something voluptuous and Cleopatra-like in its swelling contour.

The Princess Beatrice was a widow, having been married at seventeen to a Vice-Admiral of Russia, who had died a year or two after this union, leaving the daughter of Prince Ivan rich and independent, an ornament to the Imperial Court at St. Petersburg. She had, however, fallen into disgrace, and was compelled to take refuge on her father's estates, and abandon, for a time at least, the gaieties of the capital.

Prince Ivan was the first to break the silence that had prevailed since the domestics had retired. Filling a great goblet of Bohemian crystal with claret from a huge jug of crimson glass, he pushed the decanter towards his son, and said, in a deep voice,

whose mildest tones had in them something harsh and threatening: "You rode over to the bailiff's house to-day, Demetrius; what news did you hear?"

"Nothing of much interest," answered Demetrius, carelessly; "the old forester at Kulcza, I forget his name, but you know whom I mean, has been detected in selling game to the officers at Kiew, and they were to take him over to-day to the magistrate at Dimirka, to be sentenced and flogged."

"The scoundrel!" cried the old Prince, indignantly; "what has he been shooting? not my pheasants, I hope."

"Yes," replied Demetrius, with a yawn; "there were some hares, and a deer, and some pheasants."

The old Prince grew almost purple. "Insolent hound!" he exclaimed; "so a cur like old Boris must rob me of my pheasants, the birds I have had so much trouble to import from Italy; knouting is too good for the ruffian. I'll find another way to make him smart."

"Bah!" answered Demetrius, with the indifferent air that seemed habitual to his wasted features; "I always told you the preserve would fail. You cannot rear pheasants in Russia, even though each bird costs you its weight in silver: what with the cold, and the foxes, and the rogues of peasants, you will lose every one of your golden-plumaged pets."

"Not I, I'll be sworn," growled out Prince Ivan, whose red eyes grew more and more injected with blood as he spoke; "I will make such an example of Boris that no churl of them all shall venture again to touch so much as a feather from my preserves. Is that all you heard?"

"Why, no," replied Demetrius, in the same lazy tone; "of the two lads drawn for the conscription, neither is available. Gregory has cut off four fingers of his right hand with an axe, and Isaac has run away into the swamps."

"Very good," said Prince Ivan, grimly; "I shall have to furnish two fresh conscripts to the Governor of Kiew; but as for those rebellious dogs, Gregory shall be sent to my salt mine at Urzedow. To work in the dark for a score of years will make him regret even the Emperor's service, and he must learn to use the mattock with his left hand. As for Isaac, I can promise him that if he does not return I'll make the fens too hot to hold him."

"What do you mean?" inquired Demetrius, with more curiosity than was usual to him.

"I mean that I'll set the rushes on fire, and roast the

fellow, as my grandfather did the serfs that ran away after burning the mill and shooting the bailiff," answered Prince Ivan, gruffly, as he flung a fresh log upon the blazing wood-fire, which replaced the stove so generally seen in Russian chambers.

"You may chance to roast something of more importance than the miserable runaway," said Beatrice, now speaking for the first time; "my maid, Vhalda, told me that her brother had seen again the great snake that killed so many cattle last year. He was shooting ducks in the fens, and saw the creature glide through the reeds."

"And you really believe in the existence of this fabulous serpent!" said Demetrius, in a tone of pitying incredulity; "*pauvre sœur!* you are happy to be able to swallow such monstrous absurdities."

"But the serpent is not an absurdity," said Beatrice; "fifty people saw it last year: it killed scores of sheep, and the shepherds declared it to be as long and thick as a fishing boat's cable."

"Of course!" said Demetrius, shrugging up his shoulders, with the air of a *flâneur* of the Boulevard des Italiens, whom some one is trying to persuade of the truth of a romantic story; "the worst of these stupid tales about Dragons and Anacondas is, that they have no originality. Your devouring Python is merely the American Sea Serpent in a Russian dress."

"What a coxcomb you are, Demetrius!" exclaimed the old Prince, impatiently striking his fist upon the table: "you believe in nothing that is not to be found on your asphalte of Paris, or your pavement of Vienna. Our marshes hold strange guests sometimes; be careful how you venture too far into them, in your snipe-shooting excursions, Monsieur *l'Incrédule!* I have seen two such serpents myself, one when I was a boy, and one when I was scarcely your age, and I sent a rifle ball through the second, without apparently harming it in the least."

"A would-be Saint George!" sneered Demetrius, as he replenished his glass: "what a pity there was no persecuted princess to recompense such an exploit."

Prince Ivan's hideous eyes flashed ominously, but he could bear more persiflage from his son than from any other human being, and by an unwonted effort he checked the angry answer that had risen to his lips.

"Talking of princesses," said Beatrice, "Vhalda has been telling me some absurd tale about two disguised ladies of rank that Muller, the steward, has brought back from St. Petersburg. I cannot guess what such a report means."

"I think I know," said Prince Jargonoff, drinking off another goblet full of claret; "Muller was to arrive this afternoon with that old ass, Jacob, my brother's ex-tutor, and those are doubtless his daughters of whom Vhalda spoke."

"I am heartily glad to hear it," said Beatrice, nonchalantly; "if that be the case I shall not be disappointed in my new maid. I want a girl who can read to me when I am not disposed to sleep, and who can finish my pieces of embroidery, and do fifty things that these clumsy Malorossian women know nothing of. Now, if Vhalda took old Jacob Petrovich's daughters for ladies, it is plain that either the one or the other would make me just such a *Camériste* as I have been longing for."

"Don't be too sanguine," said Demetrius, as he sipped his wine; "I would not mind wagering a rouleau or two that Vhalda's disguised princesses turn out merely to be a couple of pert damsels, with the tawdry airs of refinement that make your St. Petersburg *modistes* such ridiculous caricatures of second-hand Parisian elegance. Princesses in disguise! there are no such things, except in the novels of Dumas, or on the boards of the opera! What does your red-fisted, bony-knuckled Vhalda know about princesses in disguise?"

Beatrice was probably about to make some sarcastic reply, for her thin lips became sharply compressed, and her blue eyes looked as spiteful as those of a viper, when the door opened, and a grave major-domo, dressed in decorous black, entered with noiseless tread, and bowed humbly before the prince.

"What is the matter, Simon?" asked Prince Jargonoff.

"Gospodin Muller is in your excellency's private apartments. Your highness ordered me to announce him as soon as he arrived," said the major domo.

"Good," said the prince. "I will go and talk to him. I have been as helpless since he went to St. Petersburg as if I had lost my right hand. Demetrius, will you come with me to hear the old fox's report?"

"I shall see him soon enough, I dare say," said the young noble, negligently, and his father left the room.

Prince Jargonoff was a true Russian grandee; he was uncivil

and rude to his own countrymen, but he was accustomed to treat Muller, a foreigner and a freeman, with some kindness and a good deal of consideration. It was not because of his utility, not because of his hard head and clear judgment, but because he *was* a foreigner, and had a king of his own to complain to if he were ill-treated by his Russian employer. The major domo turned to Beatrice, and executed a new reverence.

"Highness," said he, "your grandeur's maid, Anielka Petrovich, accompanied the Herr Muller, and is waiting with Mademoiselle Vhalda in your highness's ante-chamber."

Beatrice started.

"How charming," said she; "how thoughtful of Muller to choose me the one best suited for my service! Now I need no longer read those novels of Sue's, that always make my eyes ache, but that are so delightful when they are read aloud to me. And now I may have Skogla flogged as she deserves. I don't care whether it spoils her or not. I made my mind up to punish her when she broke the mirror at Christmas. O how glad I am!"

And the princess ran out of the room like a child who has heard of the arrival of a new toy. The young prince placed his glossy boots on the bronze fender, filled himself another huge glass of claret, and began to cut up a pineapple into segments. The grave major domo bowed solemnly three times before Prince Demetrius saw him.

"George Muller, the young German Gospodin, is asking to see your excellency," said the domestic at last.

"George! Well, you may bring him in," was the young diplomatist's gracious reply, and in a minute more George Muller was introduced, and stood, grinning but sheepish, before his patron. If Hans Muller was the right hand and factotum of the great landowner, George Muller was the *âme damnée* of his son, and had made himself useful to Prince Demetrius in fifty dishonourable ways. There were several Russians on the estate who envied George his emoluments and the young prince's good will; but, unscrupulous and artful as they were, the Prussian possessed two advantages that insured him the perpetual enjoyment of his post as prime minister to the heir of Jargonoff. Firstly, he had travelled, thus emancipating himself from the narrow prejudices of a village; and secondly, he was an alien, and Demetrius could speak to him without feeling the disgust and repugnance which he always

experienced when he was obliged to address a member of the lower class among his own oily countrymen.

"Sit down, George," said the young prince; "sit down, and tell me your news. What do you bring me from St. Petersburg, most useful of Mercuries?"

The young Prussian sat down, though somewhat bashfully, in the deep arm-chair which his master pointed out to him, and took with a somewhat unsteady hand a huge silver beaker of Madeira which the prince filled for him. George Muller had got over his intoxication, for his was a seasoned head, but he still felt somewhat dizzy and confused, symptoms which he tried to the utmost of his power to hide from the heir of Jargonoff.

"What have you brought me?" asked the young prince again.

"I have brought your excellency the cigars, the hookah, the tobacco, the gloves, and the English saddles," said George Muller, demurely.

"Is that all?" said the prince, yawning.

"There are several boxes of Eau de Cologne, and a great many small articles, and a great portfolio of prints, and the foils and masks from Monsieur Bertrand's," went on the young steward, musingly.

"I don't care about any of them now, except the cigars and the saddles," answered Demetrius, listlessly gazing at the half-consumed logs.

"Yes, excellency, that is all," said Muller, "unless—"

"Unless what?" said Demetrius, opening his half-closed eyes.

"Unless the prettiest girl that ever came into this country is to be counted as something," returned the steward's son.

"What are you talking about?" asked the prince, drinking off a bumper of his favourite claret, and looking askance at the Prussian.

"The sweetest maiden that ever was seen in Malorossia," replied George Muller, "Anielka Petrovich."

The prince fell back in his chair, stretched out his legs, and again half closed his eyes. George Muller watched him anxiously, half fearing lest the glittering bait he proposed should have no temptations for the worn-out old young man of fashion. At last Prince Demetrius rejoined:

"Anielka Petrovich! That is one of the daughters of the old trader my father ordered home from St. Petersburg?"

"The elder of the two," replied Muller.

"And I suppose she is tolerably well-looking, from what you say," remarked Demetrius; "some shrill-voiced, parrot-nosed wench, with the manners of a third-rate actress or a milliner's apprentice; and that crazy goose, Vhalda, who must needs call the girls disguised princesses!"

"Well, on my honour, highness!"

The prince's lip curled, but George did not observe it.

"On my honour, I am not surprised at poor Vhalda's mistake. Anielka *does* look like a princess in disguise. She is a dark, slender beauty, such as you do not often see among the peasantry of Russia, and as for her manners, your own noble sister, if you will excuse the comparison, could not surpass her in that respect."

"Are you telling me the truth?" said the prince, with an eagerness he very seldom displayed, and fixing his black eyes upon the broad face of the steward's son. "But, pshaw!" continued he, as he turned away again; "you have taken me in too often, friend George, with your sham angels and affected rhapsodies, to gull me so easily again. Do you think I have forgotten Sophia Karlovich, or the gipsy damsel at Odessa, or Minna yonder, at Kiew, all of whom you painted in the most glowing colours, but who turned out mere flesh and blood playthings, instead of the sylphides your flattering tongue had portrayed? And if the girl is really such a phœnix as you make her out to be, what kept you from falling in love with her yourself?"

"To tell you the truth, excellency, I should have done so, though these fastidious damsels are by no means to my fancy in general; but her sister, Katinka, the youngest of the two, has completely bewitched me, and I trust, my prince, that you will obtain for me Prince Jargonoff's consent to my making her my wife as speedily as possible," said Muller.

"Aha! good George!" said the diplomatist, suspiciously eyeing his useful myrmidon. "Now I begin to understand the meaning of your marvellous self-denial. So, you have kept the beauty for yourself, have you? and you have thought me silly enough to be put off with her plainer sister?"

"On my word, my prince, I assure you that you are mistaken," said Muller, in alarm. "Katinka is not at all suited for you, though she is fit enough for a rough farmer like myself, who does not want a wife as cold and haughty as a tragedy queen. Katinka is a little creature with blue eyes,

fair hair, and that clear red and white complexion you think so insipid. I doubt your admitting her to be even good-looking."

"I never trust to any evidence but that of my own eyes in such a case," answered Demetrius, drily. "I must see this blonde Venus before I decide, that is, unless you have already hidden her away."

"She is with her father and her maundering old idiot of a nurse, in the cottage where the English gardener lived, and which Prince Jargonoff ordered to be prepared for their reception. I will conduct your highness there to-morrow, or to-night, if you prefer it," added Muller, thinking that Katinka, tired by the journey, and with eyes dimmed by the tears called forth by the sudden parting from her sister and by his own brutal treatment, would look less fascinating if the prince saw her before she was refreshed by a night's sleep.

"Not to-night," answered the prince. "To-morrow I will send for you, and you shall introduce me to your bride elect. If all you say is true, why my good word to my father shall not be lacking, and we'll arrange for the wedding before the week is out. Though I cannot imagine what makes you on a sudden so anxious to take a wife, especially a poor serf's daughter."

"Pardon me, your highness," rejoined George Muller, with a cunning glance; "she is not precisely a *poor* serf's daughter. The old fellow, Petrovich, has a good house at St. Petersburg, and owns a good deal of property besides, as I learned while in the capital. And though he could not pay such a ransom as sixty thousand roubles, yet when his corn and iron and hemp are sold, there will be a pretty little fortune ready to drop to the share of Katinka's husband."

"The girls are sure to divide it, share and share alike: the old man would never leave all he had to one daughter, and I should think his savings would scarcely bear partition," said Prince Demetrius, languidly.

Muller looked still craftier than before.

"Your excellency," said he, "will be certain to provide liberally for Anielka when you are tired of her. She will then want no portion of Petrovich's property, and Katinka will be an heiress."

"Bravo, George!" cried Demetrius. "Talleyrand himself could not have hit upon a better combination. You should have been a diplomatist, as I have often said. Such talents, *mon cher*, are thrown away at Khopol."

"Anielka is with the Princess Beatrice; your excellency may easily see her and judge for yourself," said Muller.

"And to-morrow we will beat up the quarters of your blue-eyed beauty," said the prince, gaily; "so for the present, good-night."

Muller, feeling himself no longer wanted, bowed, and shuffled out.

"There goes a thorough rascal!" said Prince Demetrius, as the door closed. "But, bah! all men are rascals!" After uttering this apothegm, he stared moodily for some time at the smouldering logs of the expiring fire, and beat with his varnished boot upon the carved fender. "My life is going out, like those darkening embers," he muttered, and the hectic spot that burned in his ghastly cheek, and the dull look of his sunken eyes, fearfully corroborated his words. "It is useless to deceive oneself," he went on, still brooding over the charred logs of the fire; "I know that I am dying, as well as if twenty doctors had told me so. The candle burns lower than ever, but this fuel will keep it alight," and he poured out and swallowed a large glass of Curaçoa. "Bravo!" he exclaimed, with a brightening eye; "I feel some life in my veins still. *Vive la joie!* I have time left for one more grand passion before I die. Now to see my new toy." And after quaffing a fresh glass of the fiery stimulant, he rose from his chair and left the room with a tottering but a hasty step.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE favourite morning-room of the Princess Beatrice partook of the character of dressing-chamber and studio. It was richly and tastefully furnished with all that the experience of a French upholsterer could devise, or the fantastic whims of its owner suggest. The sofas were covered with Lyons brocade, the curtains were of the most costly Genoese velvet, and the arm-chairs were veritable sleepy hollows. Gigantic pier-glasses, and toilet-tables covered with all the paraphernalia of silver dressing-cases, scent-bottles with gemmed stoppers, and all the multitude of valuable trifles which custom renders necessaries, evinced the delight which the princess felt in the adornment of her person. A great embroidery-frame, two or three unfinished landscape-paintings, and a quantity of sketches and caricatures, many of them of great merit, and requiring

but the labour of a half-hour or so to render them perfect, were flung carelessly into corners, pell-mell with rolls of music, pieces of half-executed Berlin wool work, neglected letters, and scraps of original poetry. For Beatrice was an admirable artist, and an accomplished musician; she could do everything, except persevere. She could have earned her bread in twenty ways, had she not been a princess, but still enjoyed the elaborate education she had had forced upon her. She painted, drew, and sang, so well, that she could have made a name either by her pencil or her voice; she wrote sonnets of exquisite melody, and prose as original and epigrammatic as that of Kinglake. She had composed three-quarters of an opera for the Italian stage, written half a novel in French, that would have set the Parisians raving, had it been printed, got nearly through a German play, and translated part of Shakespeare into Russian. But she had thrown aside these imperfect proofs of a brilliant talent, and preferred to remain a mere princess, peevish, fickle, and discontented. She sat, carelessly *renversée*, in a soft cushioned beehive chair, with a shivering Italian greyhound, decked with a scarlet cloak, crouching at her slippered feet, an Indian cabinet open behind her, and the hideous monsters it contained grinning with their ivory tusks over her fair head. Before her stood Anielka, pale and embarrassed, with her eyes downcast, and replying from time to time to some question, half curious, half bantering, which the princess addressed to her in French. At the other end of the room stood Vhalda and Skogla, the two attendants of the princess, who were contemplating the new handmaiden who spoke foreign tongues so well, and looked so like a high-born lady, and yet was only a slave like themselves. Vhalda, who had a dash of romance in her nature, heartily admired the newcomer, while Skogla looked on her as an intruder and a supplanter, more especially as she knew her unforgiving mistress bore her no good will for the affair of the mirror, and feared that if Anielka permanently replaced her as Beatrice's maid, some more severe penalty than mere dismissal to the dairy or the field might be inflicted on the careless Skogla. Anielka, wearied by the long-protracted journey, distressed by the sudden separation from her sister and father, and humiliated at finding that the steward's threats were so abruptly realised, and that she was designed to be the attendant of a dame of whose cruel caprices she had often heard, had felt herself ready to sink under the weight of misery that oppressed her,

during the walk from the cottage assigned to Jacob to the prince's palace. Her first impulse on seeing the lovely face of her new mistress, was one of gratitude for the fortune that had assigned the mastery over her future fate to a delicate and tender woman, one who must sympathise with the sorrows and feel for the sufferings of one of her own sex. Poor Anielka had pictured Beatrice to herself as a bony, gaunt-featured princess, with stern eyes and an iron will, like our English Queen Elizabeth. She was charmed to see the female tyrant she had imagined converted into a fair and graceful young woman, whose looks had nothing calculated to frighten the most timid suppliant. Anielka saw the beauty of her new mistress, she admired the pliant suppleness and fine proportions of the she-panther, her glossy skin and elegant attitudes, but did not suspect the sharpness and tenacity of the talons that lay concealed within those velvet paws. She was surprised at the flippant, unpleasing tones in which the princess began to question her about her past life and her accomplishments, alternately addressing her in French and German, to test her acquaintance with those languages. But what shocked as much as it grieved her, was the utter heartlessness with which Beatrice, in a half playful, half sarcastic manner, interrogated her upon subjects which revived old recollections, now inexpressibly painful to the exiled and insulted girl, evidently caring no more for the wounded feelings of the poor maiden whose bosom she lacerated by every word she uttered, than the angler cares for the writhing of the wretched worm impaled upon his barbed hook. Every question which brought vividly to her remembrance the dear old home she had been torn from, every half-incredulous expression of wonder respecting her acquirements, gave pain to the sensitive Anielka, who now saw herself coldly and critically examined, like a horse at a fair, by one who seemed resolved to treat her as a mere machine, whose sentiments were not worth the trouble of consulting. Beatrice had been struck by Anielka's surpassing attractions in face and form, and was more surprised than pleased by her appearance. Few women have magnaminity enough to pardon her who outshines them in beauty, and independently of this feeling of jealousy, Beatrice was piqued at finding that the serf's daughter before her was more than the equal, in native dignity and inborn refinement, of the long-descended princess. Beatrice had wished for a clever attendant, but not for quite so peerless a being as Anielka, for

whom she could not help feeling in her secret heart an undefined but most involuntary respect. This instinctive feeling was enough to make Beatrice hate the poor girl now so completely in her power. Her pride rose up in arms against the homage which her judgment unwillingly paid to the conscious purity and nobleness enthroned on Anielka's brow. She reminded herself that this maiden, so different from the *soubrettes* she was used to, was a slave, and a slave's daughter, a human chattel that she might ill-treat, degrade, or disfigure at her pleasure. She took a cruel pleasure in mortifying Anielka by a thousand taunting remarks and insinuations, and having extorted from her an avowal of the fact that she had been betrothed in St. Petersburg, although no tortures, mental or physical, could have wrung from Anielka the name of him whom she considered as her fickle lover, the princess tormented her victim with so much adroitness on the topic of Klapka's desertion, that Anielka's firmness gave way.

She burst into tears, and holding out her clasped hands towards the princess, she exclaimed, "Madame, have mercy on me!" in a tone so heartrending and imploring, that it thrilled even the dull-witted Malorossian girls who stood beside the door, and the envious Skogla cast a kinder glance at the intruder who seemed so wretched at the promotion obtained at her expense.

Had Anielka been but a pretty, common-place young woman, it is possible that Beatrice would have been melted by this appeal, but she looked so beautiful through her tears, and in spite of the distress written on her face, that as Anielka stood with her clasped hands lifted in supplication, and her dark eyes fixed earnestly, wildly, on the face of her mistress, Beatrice answered her prayer by a burst of mocking laughter, so unfeeling, so harsh, so insolent, that it froze the blood in Anielka's veins. The poor girl stood like a statue, her tears flowing fast, and her eyes still fixed on the princess in wonder and dismay. And Beatrice's blue eyes, of hyæna brightness, now gleamed until they looked like those of a beautiful Medusa, changing by her fatal gaze some too lovely rival into stone. Her red lips were drawn back, and her white teeth, small and pearly though they were, sparkled like those of a tigress about to drink the life-blood of her prey. Her glance paralysed Anielka, who stood motionless, like a bird under the fascination of a snake. All that was feline in Beatrice's

vain and showy, but barbarous nature exhibited itself in a moment. She spoke, and the words dropped from her curling lips cold and cutting as an icy wind.

"So you have betrayed yourself, *cara mia!* I have found out the truth about your pretended innocence, and your retired life at St. Petersburg. You have been an actress, that is plain enough, my little pet! That fine bit of tragedy would have told to perfection on the stage. How cleverly you showed your white wrists, and made the most of your pretty eyes! O you young she-hypocrite! how could you tell me so demurely about your quiet life and your lover that jilted you? Your lover! how many lovers have you had? Fifty? sixty? a hundred? You ladies of the theatre are seldom at a loss for admirers."

Shame, anger, indignation, glowed in Anielka's bosom.

"Princess, you wrong me," said she, as she changed her suppliant attitude for one more composed, and looked at Beatrice steadily; "your suspicions are as unjust as they are severe. I am as innocent and unstained as yourself."

What was there in this comparison that made the guilty tell-tale blood suffuse the fair face of the Princess Beatrice? What remembrance of bygone days lurked festering in her memory that made her haughty face burn and glow with blushing crimson, and dyed her white forehead with the branding flush of shame? She was of spotless reputation and of illustrious lineage, while the girl before her was her slave, dazzled by her magnificence, awed by her power, helplessly at her mercy, *her* mercy, the mercy of a tiger-cat? But the keen eyes of Beatrice had read in Anielka's face that her story was true. Her cheeks were not reddened by the consciousness of sin, but by the holy glow of wronged purity. In the slave Anielka's look, and voice, and gesture spoke out, undisguised, the awful Majesty of Truth, and Beatrice bowed her head as if before a judge. For a moment the fiery remorse that gnawed at the heart of the princess repaid her the thousand sufferings she had caused those whose birth had made them her inferiors and her sport. For a moment Beatrice forgot her coronet, and her title, and her lordly rank, and proud name, and felt, deep in her shuddering soul, the blackness of the stain that made Anielka her superior, and reduced her, the mighty princess, to a guilty creature cowering before the involuntary accusation of a girl her word could crush. Oh, what a difference between the blush of

Anielka, and that of the haughty Beatrice! An instant's reflection had revealed, as the lightning flash shows the Alpine chasms that yawn around the traveller's path, the abyss over which Beatrice hung unconsciously, like some wounded bird whose heavy wings, foul with mire and blood, were no longer able to support it above the gulf that gaped below. But in that instant a light knock was heard at the door, the handle turned, and Prince Demetrius entered. As the warrior, surprised by the approach of a foe, snatches up instinctively the armour he has laid aside, so did Beatrice recover her wonted effrontery, and compose her disturbed features, before her brother had had time to observe the unwonted agitation of her usually calm nerves.

"Welcome, truant!" said she, in a voice so unshaken as to deceive even the young diplomatist, who was accustomed to boast that he judged people much more by their tones than by their looks; "welcome, brother! you have not visited my studio for six weeks at least, and I have spoiled a whole sheaf of caricatures that you would have been charmed with —they were so like Menschikoff and Osten-Sacken—merely because you did not think it worth while to come and look at them."

"You are too destructive, *chere sœur;*" said Demetrius, advancing; "you seldom give me a chance of admiring the efforts of your genius. Like our Russian peaches, your drawings never arrive at maturity. But what a pretty maid you have got!" continued he, speaking of Anielka with as much assumed composure as if she were a statue of Canova's. Anielka's dark-fringed eyelids drooped beneath the ardent gaze of the prince, a gaze whose purport even innocence could not misunderstand. The aspect of this young man, so frail, so emaciated, yet with a deathly hectic contrasting the pallor of his face, and with flaming eyes that seemed to drink in her every feature, caused her even more alarm than all the coarse ruffianism of George Muller. There was a desperation in the air of the prince, a fierce passion in his regard, that was not insanity, but approached near to it in its terrible intensity, which the instinct of Anielka interpreted at once into a threat as formidable as that which glares forth from the hollow eyes of a famished tiger. Demetrius advanced, and his gaze seemed to devour the faultless beauty before him. Beatrice, watchful as women usually are, saw and appreciated the strange expression of her brother's face; she knew his cha-

racter well; Anielka had just unwillingly humiliated her. Beatrice felt an unholy triumph as she thought of the purity before which she quailed, blighted, trampled, and sullied. She had scarcely had time to hate Anielka, and lo! up started an avenger, and that avenger was her brother. It would have gratified Beatrice to have seen any outrage, however odious, perpetrated upon Anielka, which would have degraded her from the pinnacle of unpretending, simple virtue on which she stood, and from which she had a right to look down pityingly on the moral quagmire in which the spirit of Beatrice herself was involved. The young prince advanced, his licentious eyes fixed on the trembling form of the maiden before him.

"Come, pretty one, sit down and rest yourself. It is a shame to make those delicate feet support you so long," said Demetrius, as he flung his arm rudely around Anielka's waist, and compelling her to seat herself on an ottoman, placed himself beside her.

And now a revulsion of feeling took place in the mind of Beatrice. It was not pity, nor the sympathy that makes almost every woman the champion of her sex, nor even offended delicacy. It was a sentiment innate in her childish, vain, tyrannical disposition, that love of property for its own sake which makes the urchin more anxious to rescue the old neglected toy which his brother is playing with, than to amuse himself with his own newer and more gaudy playthings. Anielka was her creature, her chattel, and Demetrius, without asking her leave, was taking unwarrantable liberties with that sentient creature, that human chattel. Had he asked permission to insult Anielka, it would have soothed the vanity of her heartless mistress. As it was, her peevish feeling of proprietorship did what compassion and modesty could not effect.

"Demetrius!" she exclaimed, stamping her small foot furiously on the floor, "have you forgotten that you are a gentleman, that you behave thus insolently in a lady's apartment. For shame! for shame! this your Parisian breeding! this your demeanour learnt in the aristocratic *salons* of Vienna! Bah! you act more like a drunken boor brawling among country wenches, than a noble and a prince of Russia."

The prince rose, vexed and angry, but submission to the caprices of women of his own rank had been his lesson and practice from childhood, and he merely shrugged his shoulders, and assumed a penitent look. "You shall not rob

me of this maid, as you did of Phœbe last year," continued Beatrice, volubly; "you never come here but when you want some selfish advantage. Seek your mistresses elsewhere."

The bang of the door, which the prince closed after him, drowned the last words.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE gangrene of slavery is perhaps, of all the social institutions of Russia, the most mischievous, and the most adapted for spreading itself over the countries which Russia, like an encroaching sea, periodically absorbs and amalgamates with herself. In fact, the principle of the abject servitude and subjection of the great bulk of the population to the tyranny of a few superiors in rank, is the fundamental basis on which the towering superstructure of the great Sclavonic empire is erected, the supreme government arrogating to itself the same arbitrary powers over the luxurious nobles, that custom and law give to the latter over their unfortunate vassals. It would have been as easy for the Emperor to send *his* vassal, Prince Jargonoff, to Siberia, as for that petty despot to consign *his* maimed serf, Gregory, to the darkness of his Polish salt-mines; nay, still more easy, for in banishing Prince Ivan the Czar would have exercised a prerogative never questioned in Russia by Magnate or peasant, whereas to send a slave belonging to one estate by forcible means to another is an illegal act, in theory at least, and one which has been forbidden by solemn ukase. The Emperor could as readily have punished Beatrice for the impertinence to the Empress that had caused her exile from the court, by handing over that stately princess to the knout of the public executioner, as Beatrice herself could chastise an offending servant, like Skogla, by the dog-whips of her father's grooms and huntsmen.

At first sight, this graduation of power, which makes the profligate inmates of the palace subject to the same capricious cruelty as they themselves so frequently inflict upon their helpless dependents, seems to contain the germ and elements of a retributive justice. This is not the case, however, for, in practice, the nobles, excepting those suspected of liberalism or detected in flagrant conspiracy, enjoy an immunity from the hourly vexations which harass their worldly inferiors. This is especially the case with the higher and more wealthy of the territorial Magnates, who appear to be tacitly allowed to

govern themselves and their serfs as they please, provided that the will of the landowner never clashes with the Czar's mandate. Even in those rare instances in which banishment, torture, and confiscation are inflicted on some rebellious or philosophical grandee, the effect produced upon the rest is not of a beneficial nature. The Russian noble, never certain that he may not have unconsciously given offence to the Czar or his ruling satraps, never sure that he may not have to exchange his luxurious castle and downy couch for a hut and a bed of leaves at Irkutsk or Tobolsk, and his creaming champagne for the icy water from some Siberian river, lives like a man whose only maxim is to enjoy the feast until it is snatched away. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die!" might be the motto emblazoned on the carriage panels of many a Muscovite hidalgo. Nor does this vague sense of dread, which every Magnate feels, lest, though the thunderbolt will only strike one head in a thousand, he should be the victim of the imperial displeasure, tend to mollify his feelings towards those whom he holds in a state of villeinage. It has been often remarked, that the mulatto and negro drivers in the plantations, although slaves themselves, are more wantonly barbarous than even the white overseers can be. The Russian Count and the black driver equally furnish examples to prove how little is the mercy which one slave can expect from another, placed in authority over him. This infernal system originated in Muscovy, or Northern Russia, where from the earliest ages the people have been serfs, although their masters have usually been of foreign descent. When the Czars conquered Southern Russia, they consolidated their sway by enforcing serfdom upon the hitherto free peasants, and portioning out the estates and the population among the favourite nobles of the conquerors. Moreover, a formal ukase, still in force, divided the entire nation into castes, and solemnly declared that the common people of Russia, "not possessing either honour or good name, *could* not be deprived of either," thus wilfully and legally degrading the immense majority of the inhabitants of the empire to a condition little above that of a herd of yahoos or other unclean animals, only to be kept in order by the chain and the lash.

The system, however, works very differently in the Southern and Northern divisions of the overgrown empire. In the North, the Muscovite, naturally tractable, and cowed by the immemorial traditions of slavery, fixed and perpetual for gene-

rations past, crouches like a dog at the feet that spurn him, and humbly caresses the hand that smites him. Nay, he usually even conceives a servile attachment for his lord, such as the hound entertains for the huntsman, whose eye he watches, and whose whip he fears. He addresses his master with awe, and often with affection, and bears the direst wrongs with a passiveness that shows how completely all sentiments of personal dignity have been blighted in his mind. The Muscovite was always a slave, and knows no more of freedom than the cage-born songster does of the wild liberty of the breezy moors and rustling woods. When the Muscovite shall be enfranchised (and may the period that breaks his manacles soon arrive!) he will hug his chain, and feel like the captive who had been too long in the Bastille to appreciate the boon which his liberators conferred upon him, when they destroyed the prison walls.

But with the Malorossian of the South, the case is widely different. Gifted with a strong independence of character more akin to the Teutonic than the Slavonian disposition, the peasant of the South remembers the days of his freedom, and looks upon his owner with the same dogged sense of injustice as that with which the Anglo-Saxon husbandmen were wont to regard their Norman tyrants. There is much obedience in Malorossia, for resistance to the will of a master is idle, but there is little fawning, and no show of love from the churl to the noble. The serf bears buffets and contumely, he drudges and submits; but it is grudgingly, and with a secret hope that a day of retribution may arrive. Brutalized by ignorance, by toil, by the absence of honourable ambition, debased by drink and immorality, labouring under the lash, the Malorossian has sunk very low, his intellect is clouded, his comforts are scant; but with all this humiliation he retains a recollection of the days when his sires were free, and when the peasant could lift up from his work the brow of a man, and not the front of a cowering slave. Every now and then the gyve is clasped too tightly, and it snaps. Human nature is sometimes loaded with a greater burden of wrongs than it can endure, and the injured Malorossian, kept a savage by his master who maltreats his body, and by the Czar who denies him education, rushes to wreak his vengeance on the immediate cause of his woes. Then on a small scale are enacted the horrors of a Jacquerie. Then the neighbouring nobles shudder to hear how some castle has been burnt by the infuriated serfs, and how some land-owner and his family have been put to death, in such frightful

torments as scarcely the most ruthless barbarian could devise or execute. And then, comes the news that a Cossack force has marched against the mutineers, that the ringleaders have died under the knout, and that the rest are exiled to the snows of Siberia. And then, the tragedy is forgotten until the smouldering fire breaks forth again. But there are other regions in which Russia appears, not as the originator of serf-dom, but as the rivet of the chain. The nobles of Poland would set free their slaves, if the imperial government would permit such a step. In Livonia, Courland, and Esthonia, within hearing of the cannon from the allied fleets upon the Baltic, the serfs groan still beneath the yoke which, but for Russia's policy, would have been snapped long ago. Where the ever-encroaching, ever-devouring frontier of Russia spreads, there spread also the foul blots of caste and slavery. And that frontier *will* spread, *will* devour, *will* absorb, let shallow-brained orators and dandy diplomatists prate as plausibly as they please, unless some barrier firmer than any that now exists be applied in time to check the raging flood. Let no one selfishly presume to say, "The dykes that keep out the rising sea are rotten and frail, but they will last *my* time!" Such an answer would be as short-sighted as it would be heartless. The waves that wash our feet to-day, will over-whelm our children to-morrow. Every patriot, every parent, every man and woman in Britain and France should remember that the deluge that this generation can stem, if united, must swell by neglect into proportions too gigantic for the next to cope with. Let not our descendants have to curse the blind lethargy that only left to England, like Ulysses in the cave of Polyphemus, the melancholy privilege of being the last to be devoured.

CHAPTER XIX.

On the morning of the day which followed the arrival of the caravan upon Prince Jargonoff's estate, Jacob Petrovich and Katinka sat together in the hut which Muller had assigned to them. This was a cottage which the English gardener who had superintended the conservatories of the Prince had formerly occupied. When war was declared, the Englishman had returned to his own country, and the hut had remained vacant until the arrival of Jacob and his daughters. The dwelling itself was neater and more spacious than the majority

of the miserable abodes of which the village consisted; its former inhabitant had trained a grape-vine over a rustic porch, which he had constructed: and the furniture which still remained in it, though somewhat scanty, had an air of cleanliness and propriety most unusual in Russia. It was situated at the extremity of the hamlet nearest to the palace, and had an open grass-grown space in front of it, and a small garden, well fenced and tolerably stocked, behind it. It must not be supposed that it was from compassionate motives that Prince Ivan and his steward had allotted this cottage, which, next to the bailiff's, was the best house in the village, to Jacob Petrovich. The choice had been made merely in compliance with the customary routine, which assigned this abode, the nearest to the palace, to the head gardener—a post which old Jacob, who had a considerable taste for, and knowledge of, horticulture, had been selected to fill. Jacob had been, indeed, the son of the chief gardener at Khopol, at an early date, when the superior art of a foreigner was not imperatively called for by Russian fashion; and Muller, who saw how unfit the old man was for the ruder labours of agriculture, to which Prince Jargonoff had intended to recal him, had determined on giving him at least the temporary superintendence of the pineries and conservatories of Khopol. The poor old man had slept but little on the night which followed his arrival at the village, and when he rose, feverish and unrefreshed, Katinka forgot her own sorrows in the task of attempting to soothe those of her father. Both of them had been much distressed by the abruptness with which Anielka had been torn from them on the preceding evening; a separation which they had dreaded, indeed, in consequence of Muller's hints; but which they had not expected to be effected in so sudden and unfeeling a manner. They had scarcely had an hour's rest in the cottage before which their waggon had halted, and into which the driver had, by Muller's orders, inducted them, when the steward and his son arrived, and ordered Anielka to accompany them without delay to the palace. A demand so startling, and so suspicious when coupled with the darkling hour of the night and George Muller's previous brutality, inspired both the sisters and their aged companions with the most lively fears; Katinka threw her arms around Anielka's neck; Jacob sank upon his trembling knees, and with folded hands prayed the intruders not to harm his child. It was by absolute violence, in spite of the shrieks of Yaska and Katinka, and the unheeded anguish of the grey-

headed father, that Anielka was led away at last in the direction of the palace. It was of some comfort to the afflicted family that George Muller paid them another brief visit two hours later, and told them, as they sat weeping silently, and crouching together, as if for protection, that the Princess Beatrice had taken Anielka into her service, and that they might make their minds easy, as she was sure to be well taken care of. As to when the Princess would allow them to see Anielka, or Anielka to visit them, he, George Muller, knew nothing about the matter, and cared still less. The unfeeling tone in which this information was given did not prevent the unhappy occupants of the gardener's cottage from experiencing a thrill of joy at the news. Anielka was safe; she was under the protection of a noble lady, who, for the sake of her own dignity, would guard her from wrong and evil, and who would soon learn to love her for herself. So miserable had been the state of mind in which the old man, the loving sister, and the fond nurse, had been plunged by the terrors of Anielka's situation, that this mitigation of their joint sufferings became to them a priceless boon, just as the most uninviting crust is a dainty banquet to the starving wretch whose limbs have been shrivelled by famine. But on the next morning, when Jacob left the bed on which he had tasted but a few minutes of perturbed sleep, oft broken and ever haunted by horrid dreams, the old man felt his bereavement with redoubled keenness. Anielka, his child, his pride and ornament, in whose youth and beauty he had seemed to grow young again, and whose lofty nature had seemed by its very contact to strengthen and elevate his own, was gone, was among strangers, was his no longer. It was the first time that her gentle good morrow had failed to greet the old man when he rose to begin the day, the first time her chair had been empty in the circle, and that he had been denied the permission to press his aged lips to her white brow, and bless her as he was used to do. He missed the soft dark eyes that ever beamed so kindly upon him; he missed the long-accustomed music of that voice which he loved so well; and sitting down in the lonely room into which he had entered, he hid his head in his hands, and groaned like a victim on the rack. Katinka found him thus, sad and afflicted, weeping scalding tears and calling on the name of his lost daughter. It was long before Katinka's gentle caresses and words of affection could console the mourner sufficiently to enable him to calm his bitter grief, and reply to her anxious inquiries. But

at last she succeeded; for sympathy is never so dearly welcomed as in the hour of deep distress; and what sympathy could be so tender as that of the warm-hearted, fond Katinka, the little blue-eyed beauty who, with her sister, had made the joy of the old man's life, and to whom Jacob had never had to reproach a word, a look, an action, that had in it aught that savoured of ingratitude or unkindness. All the petting she had received—enough to ruin fifty children—had not spoiled Katinka, nor curdled her sweet nature into sourness or selfishness. She had her faults; she was not quite as perfect as Anielka; but still there never was a more devoted, innocent, or loving daughter, sitting at the feet of a weeping old father, and gradually charming away the dark cloud of despair that brooded over his sorrowful soul, and made his aged eyes rain down unwonted tears. And at last old Jacob removed his hands from the agonized face they had concealed, and allowed himself to be comforted. Katinka suffered him not to relapse into his former paroxysm of misery, but playfully kissed him, and drew his chair nearer to the crackling fire of sticks and turfs, which Yaska had made before she went out on housekeeping matters, and which, though the month was June, was still pleasant in the bleak and chilly climate of Russia. And then Katinka assumed a cheerful smile, that contrasted with her unusually pale cheeks, and went briskly about the room, preparing their humble breakfast with an immense amount of unnecessary bustling and activity, and gaily singing, like a little blue-eyed hypocrite as she was, short snatches of merry songs, just as if, poor girl, she had had a light heart instead of an aching one in her bosom. And Jacob called her to him, and laying his hand on her shining golden hair, blessed her fervently and fondly, and then turned his face towards a little patch of blue sky that could be seen through the window, just breaking through the grey clouds overhead, and prayed, silently, though his lips moved not, that his children might keep their innocence unspotted in the accursed place to which they had been brought to dwell in servitude. Still, Katinka went on resolutely singing, and running in and out of the room, throwing fuel on the fire, placing cups and saucers on the table, which she had covered with a clean but coarse cloth, left forgotten in a drawer by the last occupant, fetching water from the well, and charcoal to heat the great urn, and, unobserved, in the midst of her feigned hilarity taking an opportunity to dry her eyes, and to hide away, beyond old Jacob's sight, the

empty chair that would have reminded him of Anielka's absence. Just as the water in the samovar was beginning to boil, and as Katinka was looking out impatiently for Yaska's return from her errand, two men, one carrying a pickaxe and the other a huge wooden stake, sharp-pointed and shod with iron, appeared on the open green in front of the house. With some labour they succeeded in driving the stake firmly into the ground, and then, having assured themselves, by giving it a vigorous shake, of its solidity, they slowly retired. A number of children instantly gathered around the spot, with that taste for sight-seeing which characterises the young in all countries, and a crowd of men and women soon came trooping in all directions across the green, as if some holiday show were about to be exhibited.

These preparations aroused Katinka's curiosity, but her attention was called from them by old Jacob, who was attempting to converse with his usual calmness, and who had begun to express a hope, a very humble hope, that they might be allowed to see Anielka from time to time. Katinka, intent on consoling the sorrows of her father, gave utterance to aspirations about the future which she was far from seriously entertaining, and went so far as to broach the idea that, in the event of Anielka's becoming a great favourite with her new mistress, not only her servitude would be much ameliorated, but the princess would not, after a long term of faithful service, refuse to intercede with her father that the Petrovich family might be once more united, and permitted to return to their own old home in St. Petersburg. Old Jacob was not very sanguine at first, for he knew more of the habits of Russian grandees than Katinka did; but so eloquent and earnest did Katinka become, inspired by her filial piety, that she not only persuaded her father that nothing was more probable, more certain, in fact, than that the princess must soon feel a warm affection for the good and gentle Anielka, and that in the course of a year or two, at latest, they would all be free and happy again in their dear home, which they would love better than ever they did before their sojourn at Khopol; not only, I say, did she manage to make old Jacob credit all these day-dreams so implicitly that he dried his eyes and smiled; but she actually converted herself to the same way of thinking, and believed everything she had said to be true and certain, as enthusiastic prophets and orators very often do. As she had just finished proving satisfactorily that the most prudent thing

for the Petrovich family to do, was to be as contented and cheerful as possible, and to await the infallible results of Anielka's high favour with the princess, and the kindly friendship Beatrice could not help feeling for Anielka, when a shout, or rather yell, broke the silence without, and immediately afterwards Yaska came running in, leaving the door open in her hurry. The nurse's face expressed considerable alarm, but it did not seem to be any apprehension for her own safety that had disturbed her, for she did not close the door, nor manifest any fear lest the crowd now gathering thickly without, should pour in through the open portal. The cause of her dismay seemed rather remote than immediate.

"O, my dear young mistress!" she exclaimed; "do you know what the stake in front of the house is meant for?"

Katinka replied in the negative, but the little colour she had left forsook her face. Old Jacob, to whom the customs of Malorossia were more familiar, began to tremble violently in every limb, and to cast haggard glances of purposeless terror around him.

"The maid of the Princess Beatrice is to be flogged this morning!"

Katinka gave an involuntary scream. "Anielka's mistress! the princess!" she cried, as all her hopes of a happy return to St. Petersburg were shivered at a blow, as remorselessly as the frail foundation of Alnaschar's fortunes.

"No, no!" answered Yaska, mistaking the meaning of Katinka's exclamation; "it is a maid from this country, one Skogla, that is to be punished, not our darling Anielka—no, not yet!"

This "*not yet*" froze the blood in Katinka's veins. "*Not yet!*" Was it possible that immunity from cruelty was only a question of time, and that the day would come when a similar chastisement might be assigned to Anielka, her delicate sister, nurtured in the enjoyment of every care and comfort! How soon, how very soon, do our swelling hopes collapse into nothing! Five minutes before, Katinka looked upon the chance of her sister's winning the friendship of the princess as a certainty, and now she was anxiously trusting that Anielka might never, at least, be subjected to the torture and humiliation of the lash.

"Do you know the reason?" she asked, with white lips, of Yaska; "it must surely have been some great offence that is to be punished so cruelly and so publicly."

"Ah, no, my dear young lady!" answered Yaska, sobbing; "it is only for breaking a mirror in the princess's dressing-room, at Christmas, as they tell me; and I hear that the princess has only waited to punish her until she had a new maid to take Skogla's place."

"It is impossible!" said Katinka, indignantly. "No lady, no woman, would so infamously revenge a trifling fault. You must have been deceived."

Jacob sat trembling over the fire, like a man in an ague fit. The scene without had revived still more the slavish fear which had cowed his soul in childhood, and which now subjugated his enfeebled reason. He looked quite a wreck, a shattered wreck of manliness.

Another yell broke forth from the people without, and in the centre of a fresh throng of peasants appeared Muller, followed by two of the prince's grooms, armed with long cutting whips. Two more followed, leading along Skogla, whose wrists were tightly bound together with a cord. The poor girl was weeping most bitterly; her convulsive sobs, and face streaming with tears, contrasting with the dress she wore, a rich blue silk robe, trimmed with deep black lace, a former gift of the Princess Beatrice.

"And is she really to be whipped?" asked Katinka, tremblingly, of Yaska.

"It is certain. Nor is that the worst part of the sentence," answered Yaska: "the princess will keep her no longer as her maid, and has ordered her to be made one of the attendants at the vapour-bath of the village. You are too young and too innocent, love, to know what *that* means. That princess must have the heart of a fiend."

"I will run to her!" exclaimed Katinka; "I will throw myself at her feet and beg her to show mercy. She is a woman, and must relent."

Yaska shook her head. "The princess is a woman," she said, "but her heart is of stone for such as us. She would not believe that any peasant girl could suffer as Skogla will do, and would laugh in your face if you begged her to spare feelings she does not credit. It would be useless."

It shocked Katinka to see how little pity or sympathy the wretched Skogla received from any member of the throng, except one poorly-clad old woman, her grandmother and only surviving relative, who followed with the rest, sobbing as if her heart would break. The people around were all peasants

and slaves, but no community of feeling made them compassionate the victim before them. Slaves rarely exhibit any sympathy for each other. That sacred quality is the appanage only of the free-born, and not of those whose few enjoyments are gained in a scramble, and whose life is dragged on upon sufferance. There was another reason to account for this indifference, in the fact that there is little communion or friendship between the domestic servants in Russia and the serfs employed in the rougher toils of agriculture. The peasant, as he eats his black bread beside his smoky fire, envies the handsome dress, the dainty fare, and the light duties of the servant, while the latter looks with distaste and contempt upon the uncultivated boors of the neighbourhood, and tries to ape those foreign manners in which the more educated Russians delight. Skogla was far from popular; in her heyday of prosperity she had been accused by her former friends of pride and arrogance, and in her hour of disgrace, no voice was raised in her behalf, no tears, save those of her aged relative, were shed for her. On the contrary, it was an occasion on which some of the worst features of the debased character of the ignorant Malorossians were exhibited in all their undisguised depravity. Wherever poor Skogla looked for pity, some hard, unfeeling laugh, or brutal taunt, answered her silent appeal. The women jeered at one whose smart attire had aroused their envy for years; the children mowed and gibbered at her like malicious elves, and the young boors punished her former pride by loading the unprotected girl with insults and affronts, as her grinning conductors led her slowly along. Her silk dress was in rags by the time that, weeping and breathless, she reached the stake, to which her fettered wrists were instantly chained by Muller. The amateur executioners prepared their formidable whips, twenty rude hands at once seemed to rend Skogla's garments, shred by shred, away, and soon the whips fell heavily, lash by lash, upon her quivering flesh, while at every fresh stroke a fearful scream, a scream only too terribly eloquent, broke from the wretched sufferer. Katinka was half maddened by the dreadful sound. Her first impulse was to rush to the princess and implore her to relent; her second was to break through the crowd that environed Skogla, and tear away the victim from the stake to which she was bound. Both schemes were fruitless, hopeless; and Yaska restrained her, though with difficulty, from attempting an interference whose only result could have been

her own punishment. It was horrible to see the interest, most remote from pity, with which the spectators watched the whistling cuts of the whips, and heard the thrilling screams of the sufferer. Most untaught and rude natures delight in witnessing pain and bloodshed. We see this taste strongly evinced by the denizens of our own streets, who lurk about slaughter-houses and flock to executions. The appetite is stronger still in a Malorossian village. Like Romans gloating over the agonies of their gladiators, the peasants grinned as the blood started freely at each stroke of the scourges that, knife-like, lacerated Skogla's flesh. Lash! lash! lash! the pliant thongs hissed like snakes in the air, and then fell heavily, twining around the victim as if they had been serpents indeed. And what fearful cries followed the powerful blows! Every stroke and scream wrung Katinka's heart, as she listened in horror. Skogla's voice grew hoarse, and sunk into a whisper; she would have fallen, but she hung suspended by her bruised wrists from the tough stake to which she was chained. At last the cruel sound of the whips ceased. The executioners rested from their toil. It was over. Skogla had not fainted, though the water Muller threw in her face, fancying her insensible, revived her. She was dragged to her feet and unchained from the stake, half-naked, blood-stained, exhausted with an agony of pain and shame. Her old grandmother crept timorously up to her, crying bitterly, and, kissing her dark-flushed face, wiped away the stains from her bleeding and torn shoulders, and covered them with her own iron-grey cloak; it was all she could do, poor soul; she was only a miserable, wrinkled, blear-eyed old woman; but to Katinka's eyes she looked as beautiful as an angel, as she accomplished this deed of love and charity. Even this touching little scene did not melt the crowd. They had endured too much themselves not to feel a perverse pleasure in the woes of one they did not at any time like, and who was abandoned to be their holiday sport. Their jeers and laughter were unabashed by what they had seen. For them misfortune had no dignity, and deserved no respect.

And now the master of the vapour-bath came to claim his apprentice. To the eternal infamy of Russia, not only women, but young girls of all ages, are, in many districts, employed as attendants in these baths, where, in the midst of the most revolting orgies and spectacles, all delicacy and womanhood are crushed and trampled under foot. Skogla well knew what

a destiny awaited her, as might be seen by the despairing glance she threw around, as she was torn from her old relative, and dragged towards the vapour-bath, where for the future she was to be the servant, jest, and plaything of every ruffian in the country who could afford a few copecks for the national luxury. The crowd understood the look, and answered it by such a laugh as demons might give over a condemned soul.

CHAPTER XX.

THE crowd had scarcely dispersed after the spectacle of Skogla's punishment had terminated, and Katinka had yet the terrible shrieks of the poor creature ringing in her deafened ears, when George Muller made his appearance in the open door-way, accompanied by a young man whose form was shielded from the sharp morning air by a large cloak of the most costly fur that the black foxes of Siberia could supply. The dress, the mien, and the haughty though careless look of the prince at once betrayed his rank to Katinka, and a thrill shot through her as she felt that she stood before the brother of the pitiless Beatrice and the son of the grim Prince Ivan.

"So, my pretty Anna, Irene, or whatever your name may be, you know me, it seems, without the ceremony of an introduction," said the prince, who had noticed Katinka's start and blush, and who advanced and patted her cheek with contemptuous familiarity, as he spoke. Katinka coloured deeply, and withdrawing herself from the insolent caress of the prince, she executed a formal reverence, and stood a little aloof, with her eyes fixed upon the ground.

"And what is your name, pretty one?" asked the prince, as he scanned the maiden as critically as he would have done a horse offered him for sale.

"My name is Katinka, my lord," replied the poor girl, keeping her eyes still bent upon the ground to avoid the bold stare of the prince.

"And whom have we here?" said Demetrius, turning towards the old man and Yaska.

"I am Yaska, mademoiselle's old nurse," answered Yaska, with a courtesy whose solemnity made the prince laugh.

"And that old dotard, who sits shaking over the fire, and who has not good manners enough to answer when your

highness deigns to speak to him, is Jacob Petrovich;" said George Muller, rudely twitching Jacob's arm.

The old merchant rose mechanically.

"Yes, excellency, I am Jacob Petrovich, your excellency's humble slave," said he, looking at Demetrius with a sort of hopeless fear that seemed to have beset him since his arrival at Khopol.

"You were a merchant at St. Petersburg, and a rich man, I have been told, though how such a stupid-eyed driveller ever made money passes my comprehension. Can you give me an idea how you managed?" said Demetrius in the sneering tone so habitual to him. Jacob looked at the questioner, and pondered over the question, but his once acute intellect was palsied by grief and fear. Unable to frame a more appropriate answer, or to collect his ideas, he replied,

"I am Jacob Petrovich, lately a merchant at St. Petersburg, your highness's slave, ready to obey your gracious commands."

"I have no commands for you, dotard," said the prince, harshly; "I may have some for your daughter, perhaps. Will *you* obey me, pretty one?" and he drew Katinka towards him, and kissed her repeatedly, while Muller looked jealously on.

"Bah!" said the prince at last, pushing the struggling girl away from him; "I forgot my errand till George's long face reminded me of it. I did not come to flirt with you, sweet Katinka, but to warn you to be prepared to marry my trusty George Muller here, as soon as the Emperor gives you leave."

"The Emperor! excellency," said Muller in dismay; "I thought I had my prince's word that the marriage should take place in a week." Katinka gave a scream, and ran to hide her face on her father's bosom.

"No, George," said the prince, negligently; "I spoke about it to my father this morning, and he reminded me that as you have the bad taste to be a Lutheran, and the luck to be a German, the Emperor's consent is necessary, before the Papas would dare to unite you to that orthodox little blue-eyed trembler. So I will write to St. Petersburg for the permission, and you must curb up your impatience, George, for six weeks or so, for the Imperial Chancery does not hurry its decisions, I can assure you." George Muller looked the very picture of disappointment and baffled desire. The prince laughed like Mephistophiles himself, and having enjoyed for a few moments the confusion and misery of Katinka and the rage of his satellite,

he again patted Katinka's cheek as carelessly as he would have stroked the silken ears of a spaniel, and left the house, followed by Muller.

CHAPTER XXI.

A FORTNIGHT had passed away since the Petrovich family reached Khopol, and a hot and sultry July had succeeded to a somewhat chilly June. Jacob Petrovich had in a great measure regained his former composure of mind, and had entered upon his new duties as head gardener. The old man worked hard, and studied diligently the means of pleasing his masters, since he felt that his success or failure in gratifying the Jargonoffs would redound much to the happiness or misery of his children. He continually sent up handsomer bouquets, of richer flowers, and more tastefully arranged, to the Princess Beatrice, than the English gardener had ever presented her with. Jacob hoped in this manner to propitiate the princess, and earn her indulgence for his child. He had seen Beatrice once and Prince Jargonoff twice, while working among his plants in the grand conservatory.

Prince Ivan had spoken to him, gruffly and shortly, and turned away; for, to say the truth, he was only vindictive so long as any dependent appeared inclined to defy his authority, and he had almost forgotten his ancient grudge against Jacob in the deep humility and zealous service of the ex-merchant. Not that Prince Ivan would have consented to restore him to his home. Had he done so he would have felt that he had resigned a privilege, the loss of which diminished his importance. In his younger days Prince Ivan, when he visited St. Petersburg or Odessa, had compelled several of the richest merchants of the place, who were born his serfs, to put on his livery and attend as lackeys at his grand banquets, a practice not unusual with the Russian noblemen, who love thus to humiliate the men whose money can buy them everything except freedom. If the prince had emancipated Jacob, he would have felt as if he had parted with a something absolutely indispensable to his dignity. He would sooner have set free fifty uneducated slaves than one man who could think. But he had plenty of occupation for his mind, without troubling himself about Jacob Petrovich.

The allies were at Varna, and the war was going on un-

favourably upon the Danube. The brilliant prowess displayed by the Turkish Murat, the brave Ismail Pacha, when he rode into Citate on his white charger, beneath a storm of musket balls, and the profound strategy of Omer Pacha, had taken the Russians by surprise. Recruits were eagerly demanded, and, to the indignation of Prince Ivan, a fresh and larger levy of conscripts drew away many of the most valuable of the able-bodied men from his vast estates, and his finances were taxed for the transport and equipment of the soldiers whom he was forced to contribute. Prince Jargonoff disliked the Turks and English, but he hated the Emperor, and detested Menschikoff, "that grandson of a pastrycook," as he always called him. His abuse of the Czar's favourite became so open and violent as to reach the ears of the Governor of Kiew, who politely invited the prince to desist from expressing any sentiments on the subject of the war and its conduct, unless such sentiments should coincide with the opinions which the *St. Petersburg Journal* prescribed for all loyal Russians.

Klapka and Yanos had been sent with their regiment to the Danube, and were already engaged in conflict with the now victorious Turks. Katinka still dwelt with her father in the gardener's cottage, no menial task having been assigned to her, in consequence of her position as the bride elect of the steward's son. She was frequently annoyed by a visit from George Muller, but would never receive him except in Yaska's presence, and always steadily though mildly refused to consent to a union with one whom she neither liked nor respected. George Muller laughed at her firmness, however, and only occupied himself in chiding the sluggish movements of the Imperial Chancery, whose permission was indispensable for the celebration of a wedding between a member of the orthodox church and a Lutheran. Once Katinka had seen Mark, who had come over from Kiew in his Tartar dress, and had contrived to have an interview with her without exciting any suspicion, the villagers being perfectly accustomed to the sight of Dressing-gown Tartars. Mark, however, had not yet been able to hear of any safe method of proceeding to the coast, and was about, in his Tartar habiliments, to start for the nearest port or creek, where a shallop might be hired to convey Katinka, her father, and her sister, to a place of safety. Mark's visit, and his hopeful conversation and buoyant spirits, in some measure cheered poor little Katinka's drooping heart, but when he was gone, and she thought of him, far away on his perilous mission,

in which discovery would be death, the probable fate of her lover gave her a fear and an anxiety the more to add to the load that already nearly crushed her. She had been twice permitted, as well as her father, to see Anielka for a brief space. Anielka looked ill and harassed, but beautiful in her paleness, and she strove to spare a pang to her father and sister by depicting her life in the palace in as favourable colours as possible, an innocent piece of duplicity which threw a species of constraint over the intercourse between those whose hopes and feelings had once been in common and undisguised.

Anielka's life was far from being a happy one. Beatrice was a hard mistress. At one time she would flatter and caress Anielka until the poor girl almost believed that the proud princess was becoming attached to her, would force on her acceptance valuable and brilliant presents of lace, jewellery, books—anything that came to hand. At another, she would upbraid Anielka with furious volubility, taunt her with all the ingenious subtlety and heartlessness of her cruel nature, and even strike her with a force of which the princess's slender hand would have seemed hardly capable. But Beatrice was the type of a Russian *lady*, self-indulgent, petulant, and vindictive. She had been used from her childhood to beat her attendants, and to buffet the tall lackeys whose red and white liveries formed the ornaments of Prince Jargonoff's palace-hall in St. Petersburg. During the brief period of her residence at the capital as a widow, her cruelty was severely animadverted upon by several foreigners of rank, and who, not being Russians, could shudder at the torments inflicted upon even their inferiors. Beatrice was pronounced only one degree better than the notorious but lovely monster of barbarity, Katrinka Rostopchin, who amused herself by sticking pins into the arms and bosom of a beautiful female slave (incredible as this may appear, it is matter of history); and when during a most severe frost Beatrice kept her carriage waiting for four hours in front of the Cheritoff Palace, while she danced at a ball given by the princess, in consequence of which act of wanton heartlessness one of her postilions, a child of twelve, was actually frozen to death in the street, while the other had his fingers frost-bitten and mortified, a terrible outcry of reprobation was raised against her. The ambassadresses ceased to bow to Beatrice; no foreign lady would dance in the same quadrille as the daughter of Jargonoff: the Empress warmly remonstrated with her on the

scandal she was bringing upon the great names of Russia. Beatrice replied with sarcastic impertinence; the Empress reported her words, and she was banished from court, and denied permission to travel. Her temper had not been materially improved by this episode in her career, and many a broken spirit, and not a few broken hearts, might have been justly charged to the smiling, courteous, highly accomplished Princess Beatrice, who was never at a loss for a reply to the wittiest repartee or most cutting epigram, who fascinated every stranger that approached her, who had been too adroitly discreet ever to give calumny an opportunity for blackening her reputation, and who had seemed to many travellers who did not know her real character, quite a refreshing oasis in the desert of Russian barbarism. Beatrice more than once compelled Anielka to read to her, standing, for hours together through the long night, until the poor wearied girl fainted, with the words of some novel of Sue or Féval, which she had been reading aloud until nature gave way, swimming confusedly before her eyes. On these occasions Beatrice would calmly ring the bell, and order Vhalda to remove Anielka, as indifferently as if she had been an actual machine. Anielka was also exposed to worse annoyances in the shape of the odious and incessant persecutions of Prince Demetrius, which became daily more and more insupportable. She studiously avoided his presence, and often vainly implored him to desist from his brutal pursuit of her, but the prince was as hard-hearted as his sister, and never lost an opportunity of insulting the unhappy Anielka.

CHAPTER XXII.

It was towards the commencement of the second week in July, on one of those fresh and misty mornings whose light vapours usually prove the forerunners of a day of great heat, that Anielka was sitting beside the open window of her room, which was situated at so short a distance from that of the Princess Beatrice that the slightest note of the silver handbell in the latter's chamber could summon Anielka to the presence of her mistress. The princess was a late riser, however, and Anielka, as usual, had no occupation throughout the pleasant hours of morning. Leaning her head upon her hand, she sat pensively gazing from the window, musing upon her old home and her

former life upon the far away banks of the Neva, upon her blighted hopes, her simple pleasures withered on their stem, and one other sorrow which she had buried in her own heart, far from human ken or sympathy, the supposed abandonment of Klapka. As she listlessly gazed from the open lattice upon the fair scene below, while her thoughts wandered in a far distant region, her senses all unconsciously imbibed a refreshing and soothing influence from the summer beauty without. The trees of the garden were living domes and pyramids of blossoms and verdure; the grass was yet unscorched by a long continuance of fiery sunshine, and every trim shaven lawn shone with the cool greenness of a prodigious emerald. The birds sang sweetly and strongly, hidden as they were among the green leaves, until a poet might have fancied the Eastern fable was realized, and that the trees themselves were giving forth those gushes of song that burst from among their clustering branches. The bright parterres were gorgeous with flowers, glowing rubies, and turquoises, and pearls, and topazes, and blood-red garnets, crowned every slender stalk, around which the bees hummed with the rippling murmur of a waterfall. The light mists were already growing filmier and more filmy, and gradually dissolving into the blue ether, as the grateful rays of the sun acquired redoubled strength. A breeze, the very softest, gentlest zephyr that ever blew from the golden regions of the south, swept through the waving branches of the shrubberies, and toyed with the millions of gossamer-like spider's threads that stretched their almost viewless coils from bush to bush, and from grassblade to grassblade, looking like silvery nets of fairy workmanship. It was impossible for any lover of nature not to feel, however unwittingly, the magic charm which such genial weather sheds around; and Anielka felt herself comforted as if by an unseen but ever-present friend. The exquisite harmony that prevailed around, the happy carol of the birds, the rich odours that streamed upwards from a thousand blooming flowers, half diverted her mind from the gloomy impressions that for some time past had clouded her imagination as with a funeral pall. Her griefs seemed but a speck, an atom, in the contemplation of the vast and widely-diffused happiness of the Creation. The very fountain in the centre of the lawn beneath her window seemed joyful in the increasing sunlight, and tossed its liquid spangles merrily aloft. While Anielka was musing thus, the door of her room opened, noiselessly but abruptly, and Yaska

entered, and cautiously closed the door. The sound made Anielka start and look around. Yaska put her finger on her lips as if to caution her to be silent, and this gesture, coupled with the signs of strong agitation which marked the old woman's wrinkled features, caused Anielka an involuntary shudder of alarm. There was nothing in itself surprising in the fact of Yaska's visit. She was a native of Khopol, one or two of her relations were servants in the house, and she had easily managed to conciliate the other domestics, and to obtain leave to visit Anielka every day. But the disturbed look of old Yaska and her warning finger were quite enough to arouse the apprehensions of one so unprotected as Anielka.

"Hush!" said the old nurse, approaching her young mistress with the utmost precaution against letting her footfalls be heard; "hush, dove of my heart; they think I have gone home — the servants think so, I mean—and they must not know that I am with you, if I would still hope to slip out unperceived."

"What do you mean, dear Yaska?" said Anielka, rising and taking the old woman's hand kindly.

"Is *she* asleep?" asked Yaska, in a whisper, as if she feared to be overheard.

"The princess," said Anielka.

Yaska replied by a nod. "She never rises before noon at the earliest. She sleeps but little during the night, and never wakes till mid-day," answered Anielka.

"O my nursling, my dearest young mistress!" exclaimed Yaska in an under-tone, but very earnestly, "you and I, and your father, and your sister, and all who love you, have great cause to be thankful to heaven this day."

"You frighten me, Yaska! what has happened? my father is not ill, I hope, nor Katinka? Tell me, for the love of the Panagia, what is the matter!" said Anielka, whose heart now fluttered like a bird alarmed by a hawk.

"Thanks be to Heaven!" answered Yaska, "I came across the demesne this morning to the palace, instead of going as usual by the road. Had I come by my usual path, my child, O what, what would have become of you! But good Saint Vladimir was merciful, and led me where I could hear of the intended villany in time to baffle it."

It was with some little difficulty, partly owing to her own and partly to Yaska's agitation, that Anielka succeeded in obtaining from her old nurse a coherent account of what she had heard, and when the story was told, the anguish

and terror of the poor maiden became so distressing, that it was long before the earnest prayers of Yaska could induce her to compose herself. It appeared that Yaska had on that morning chosen to traverse the beautiful demesne of the palace, instead of taking the common and more direct route by the road. She had entered the park by a side gate, and was passing across a plot of velvet turf, shadowed by a clump of oaks, in preference to the broad gravelled walks, when she suddenly heard a voice she knew well, that of the detested George Muller, pronounce Anielka's name. Ever watchful when the safety of her darling nurslings was concerned, Yaska had crept noiselessly to the edge of a dark thicket, where in a recess, formed by cutting away a number of thorny branches, and which had thus been made into a living arbour, two persons were conversing. These were George Muller and his patron, the young Prince Demetrius Jargonoff. Yaska crouched down among the thick shrubs that formed an almost impervious circle around the speakers, and, unobserved herself, was able to watch their gestures and catch every word they uttered. The conversation she thus overheard caused her the utmost alarm. It concerned a villanous plot against the honour of Anielka, which had been devised by Muller, and which the prince was resolved to put into execution at once. Yaska, not having lost a word uttered by the chief conspirator or his accomplice, was enabled to warn the terrified Anielka that her chamber was to be changed that very night, and that her sleeping apartment was to be assigned in a remote wing of the palace, entirely uninhabited, and where even a cry for aid would be most unlikely to reach any human ear. In this manner, Anielka would be entirely at the mercy of the prince, and it needed but the remembrance of his brutality, independently of the words which Yaska had heard fall from his lips, to prove to her how slender was the hope of appealing to his pity or forbearance.

"And does the princess know of this infamy?" asked Anielka, her colourless lips quivering with emotion.

"I should say she knew nothing of it, from a chance remark of her brother's," answered Yaska. "The prince is to tell her he wants to give your room to one of a large party of officers from Kiew, who are to dine and sleep here to-night."

"If I were to go to her, and claim her protection?" said Anielka, irresolutely.

"I would not trust her!" answered Yaska, shaking her

head; "I dare say, more from whim than from kindness, she would protect you if you slept, as at present, so near her. Indeed the prince seemed to fear that his sister might overthrow all his plans, were you left in this apartment. But I do not believe that she would do anything but laugh at you, were you to remonstrate against your chamber being changed, and if you told her of the plot, she would declare you had dreamt or invented it."

"What then can I do?" said Anielka, looking despairingly at Yaska.

"You must fly, my dearest mistress, fly with your faithful old Yaska, who held you on her knee when you were a lisping child, and to whose love and care your poor mother confided you when she died," answered Yaska, earnestly, and grasping Anielka's hand between her tanned fingers.

"Fly! and whither?" asked Anielka, hopelessly, for she felt the same inability to escape that a sparrow feels when the cold green eyes of some feline prowler are glaring on him with their mesmeric fascination.

"To the fens, my own dove! to the fens, whose trackless morasses and reedy forests have shielded many a hunted slave from the lash and the branding iron! I know them well. I was born within a mile of Khopol, and every path is as familiar to me as to the hunters and fishers. Remember, in a few brief hours it will be too late. Once in that desolate wing of the palace, where there are sliding panels and trap-doors as I have heard, and where every room can be entered by the aid of the prince's pass-key, what chance of safety can you have? If you barricaded your chamber it would be useless, for no door can stand the axe, and the prince and Muller are not men to hesitate because an inch or two of wood is in their way."

"I will fly, then!" cried Anielka, springing hurriedly towards the door, "let us lose no time, dear Yaska. Let me hide myself, were it in the grave!"

To an immediate departure, however, Yaska strongly objected. She recalled to Anielka's remembrance that the princess would soon awake and summon her, that if she were not to be found, suspicion would be aroused, and a search set on foot before the fugitives could gain a place of security. The best plan which Yaska could devise, was that she herself should at once leave the palace and return to the cottage, that Anielka should remain quietly all day in her chamber, fulfilling her duties as usual, and being careful by no word or look to indicate her design or her fears to her mistress or

the servants of Jargonoff. At dusk, while the prince and his military guests were at dinner, Anielka could by the exercise of a little coolness and ingenuity quit the house without attracting notice, as if to stroll through the palace gardens, and then, gliding unobserved from clump to clump, from shrubbery to shrubbery, could reach the side gate of the demesne, where Yaska promised to await her, to act as her guide and protector. To this scheme, after some natural trepidation, Anielka gave her assent; but it was a less easy matter to persuade her to agree not to give her father and sister any indications of her intention, and neither to wish them farewell nor to communicate to them the place of her retreat. Yaska urged, however, that her old master, though he had in a great measure regained his faculties, was still much aged and shaken, that his dread of the power of the Jargonoffs was excessive, and that, if interrogated, he would be unable to keep the secret of his daughter's hiding-place. With regard to Katinka, Yaska told Anielka for the first time of the frequent annoyances she had to endure from George Muller, of her anxieties about Mark Forster's fate, and of her continual tremors lest she should actually be forced to become Muller's wife, a destiny she looked on with loathing, and the old woman prayed Anielka not to add to Katinka's difficulties by entrusting her with a secret which she would not betray, but could not conceal her knowledge of, in which case the most unscrupulous means of extorting a confession would be resorted to. At last Anielka yielded this point, and Yaska, again cautioning her to be circumspect, left the room, carrying with her under her cloak a small bundle of such necessary articles as Anielka would require in her hiding-place.

The prince's dinner-hour was seven, and at half-past seven Anielka was to be at the gate of the demesne, where Yaska had promised to await her. Yaska had not long been gone, when the silver hand-bell sounded from the chamber of the princess, and Anielka hastened to answer the summons. During the long process of the toilet of Beatrice, Anielka endured positive tortures. Every idle remark of the princess seemed to her distempered fancy an indication that Beatrice had overheard her conversation with Yaska, and was determined to frustrate her plan. She feared lest the occasional blush that suffused her face, the uncontrollable trembling of her limbs, even the loud beating of her fluttering heart, should be remarked by the princess, and cause suspicion, and with it the ruin of her hopes. She shunned the searching blue eye of

Beatrice, as if she dreaded lest her mistress, like a fairy queen, should possess the power of reading her thoughts and divining her intentions. And the more anxious she felt to appear cool and composed, the louder was the beating of her rebellious heart, as if, like a treacherous spy in a beleaguered city, it was resolved to betray her agitation to the cruel princess. Fortunately, however, Beatrice was in a good humour, and everything appeared to her *couleur de rose*. She was more indolent and less acute than usual, for, with her, penetration and shrewdness were merely weapons to serve her ordinary perversity of temper. It was with a sigh of inexpressible relief that Anielka saw her capricious mistress, fully arrayed, sail down the marble stairs in all her pride of beauty, like a milk-white swan upon a lake. Anielka was next summoned to partake of the usual midday repast in the great hall set apart for the domestics of Jargonoff. Here she had less difficulty in playing her part than might have been supposed, for the servants treated her with considerable respect, both as the principal attendant of Beatrice, and as the object of the pursuit of Prince Demetrius, and considered her as a personage who might one day possess great influence in the household. No one, therefore, remarked that she only feigned to eat, while she was able to remain silent without attracting observation, being known to be of a retiring nature. Anielka was leaving the hall, at the end of the repast, when an inferior handmaiden was sent to her by the important housekeeper, to tell her that her room was needed by a young officer, one of the prince's expected guests, and that another chamber had been provided for her in the western wing, to which she must transfer her slender wardrobe at once. Anielka set about this task immediately, aided by the girl who had brought her the message; and, when she was fairly installed in her new apartment, and the female who had carried up her valise had withdrawn, she looked fearfully about her, like some timid native of the woods, suddenly caught in a trap. The room was a large one, with a sort of ghostly, dusky look, and very old furniture, quaint and dark, and strongly contrasting with the modern decorations of the other part of the palace. The walls were hung with moth-eaten tapestry, that flapped to and fro as if some one were hiding behind it, and stealthily creeping out. There were three doors, and several large cupboards and presses half filled with miscellaneous lumber. The windows, however, looked out on the park and a portion

of the garden, and the cheerful prospect without was some compensation from the sombre air of all within. But the room was one of those strange old rooms that always have a look of gloom, and mystery, and sadness; and Anielka shuddered as she gazed around it. The rustling of the tapestry alone was sufficiently alarming. A horrid idea seized on her mind—the idea that Demetrius was perhaps lurking behind the faded arras, or concealed in some other hiding-place, ready to pounce upon his wretched prey. She trembled in every limb, and could not withdraw her eyes from the tapestry, while she dared not boldly examine the various places of concealment which abounded in the room, lest she should rush upon the danger she sought to avoid. The breeze ceased to blow, and the tapestry rustled no more. All the long afternoon Anielka, her nerves somewhat calmer than when she first found herself alone in the lonesome chamber, sat by the open window, often starting as a rat would run along the deserted corridors, or a distant footfall appear to approach her apartment. The fresh bright day had grown insupportably hot and sultry, large copper-coloured clouds floated lazily along, through whose fringes the red sun glared luridly, and the stillness of the parched air, heavy and oppressive, caused Anielka to feel a gradually-increasing languor and despondency.

The birds had become silent, the deer in the park had left the lawns for the dense coverts, and the peacocks came in stately file towards the house, as if for shelter. All things presaged a storm, and a deadly silence reigned over the country, while the flowers that decked the trim parterres like living jewels dropped their thirsty heads, and felt the powerful sway of the coming thunderstorm. The officers from Kiew, whom Prince Jargonoff, at his son's instigation, had invited, now came gaily cantering up the park, their showy uniforms and gold lace glinting back the fiery rays of the sun. Anielka fancied that there was something unnatural in the sight of these jovial and handsomely-clad horsemen careering merrily along, with song and jest that floated through the heavy air, and reached the lattice where the lonely maiden sat, contrasting with the formidable stillness that formed the prelude to the tempest, and jarring with the depression which every animal and every plant felt, as the metallic-tinted clouds came rolling down in their gloomy phalanx. Still, the outburst of the tempest lingered, and the fury of the coming storm seemed to await its time. Anielka pressed her hand to her throbbing

temples, and a thousand wild thoughts succeeded each other in her aching brain. In every smothered sound she heard the approach of Demetrius, while her vivid imagination conjured up innumerable obstacles, rising, like the waves of the sea, to prevent her flight. At last a footstep was heard in the corridor, a hand tapped at the door. Anielka's pulsations were checked by terror; she gazed upon the opening door as the poor exhausted hare gazes upon the bloodthirsty hounds that leap and howl around her, but to her relief she found that the visitor was only Vhalda, come to tell her that the princess would not need her services in dressing for dinner. This was a fearful ordeal spared her. Anielka was wild with joy, her heart throbbing, bounding, as Vhalda retired, and she thought of her escape, now become more facile and more probable. The dinner-bell sounded at last, and as every deep reverberation that sounded from the belfry turret made the roof vibrate, Anielka felt as if it tolled the knell of her own burial. Direful fears, starting up like spectres, assailed her. How if Yaska had been seen by those whose conference she had overheard! how if some spy had listened to her conversation with Anielka! how if Demetrius or Muller were hidden in the gardens, lying in ambush among the thickets of the park or the corridors of the palace, or lurking in some recess of her very room! She dared not turn her head, so agonizing were her terrors, lest she should see the licentious eyes of Demetrius, or the satyr-like face of Muller, glaring over her shoulder. While the guests of Prince Jargonoff were feasting merrily around his board, what torments was one unhappy girl, and she the purest, gentlest, sweetest, inmate of the palace, enduring in her distant chamber. But the storm burst. The lightning flashed far and near across the illumined horizon, and flung a blue pale gleam into the room where Anielka sat; the roll of the majestic thunder made the palace rock as if an earthquake were abroad; and the big drops of hail and rain came driving against the casements with a fast-rushing roar. Anielka rose, threw her mantle over her shoulders, drew the hood over her raven hair, and, mustering all her courage, hastened from the room, fearing, as she left it, to feel a restraining hand gripe her shoulder, and to hear a mocking laugh fill her affrighted ear. But she met with no obstacle. The stairs and passages were deserted, and without meeting any one, or hearing any sound but that of her own tread, she reached the door. She glided out into the storm; the rain beat fiercely upon her, the

lightning dazzled her, but through the crashing thunder and the bursting hail she steadily made her way, pressing valiantly on, guilt, infamy, and splendour behind her; before her penury and innocence. She hurried on, past grove and thicket, past shrubbery and lawn, through the garden and through the park, and stood breathless, at length, beside the wicket where Yaska was waiting. Together they quitted the demesne, and made their way as rapidly as possible towards the morasses of the Borysthenes. Yaska was perfectly familiar with the route, and adroitly contrived to avoid the village; and, without encountering any one, the fugitives arrived in a lonely tract of country, whose marshy meadows were intersected by numerous brooklets. Still advancing, they arrived among the weedy meres and enormous beds of reeds which marked the borders of the huge river. Yaska selected a narrow path, and plunged into it without hesitation, in spite of the pelting of the rain, and the shaking of the treacherous ground beneath her feet. Anielka followed, and they passed swiftly on through yellow jungles of marsh reeds, and perfect forests of broad flag-rushes, the brown soil of the morass quaking fearfully as they trod it, and the turbid water oozing up from among the turfy hillocks, and obliterating their footprints in an instant. As the shades of evening were darkening like a veil around them, Yaska and Anielka reached a low-built hut, erected at the head of a narrow creek, whose bulrush-fringed banks led down to the mighty river. The hut was a poor abode, built of turfs and thatched with reeds, but its windows were glazed, its door was perfect, and a couple of canoe-like skiffs were moored in the creek hard by, while the nets and eel-baskets under a neighbouring shed proclaimed it the dwelling of a fisherman.

"My nephew, Stefann, lives here. You may trust in his fidelity," said Yaska, as she lifted the latch, and ushered Anielka into the humble tenement.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE hut in which Anielka had taken refuge was one which had been erected for the convenience of one of those fowlers by whom not only Prince Jargonoff's table, but also the markets of Kiew, were supplied. Its present tenant was Stefann, Yaska's nephew, a good-natured young man, who was em-

ployed as a fisherman and wild duck shooter by the prince, and who led a solitary life in the fens. Stefann was of a good disposition, was willing to befriend one whom his aged relative so tenderly loved, and, moreover, felt as much compassion for Anielka as could be reasonably expected from a boor who had lived always among untaught companions. He was a free man, too, having bought his freedom from Prince Jargonoff, who seldom objected to emancipating an ignorant, rough serf, who could pay for his freedom, though he would not have conceded their liberty to Dante or Michael Angelo, had they been unlucky enough to have been born on his estates. Altogether, Stefann, who ran no risk of being arbitrarily flogged by Prince Ivan in case Anielka was discovered, was not unwilling to give her shelter and protection. He repaired every morning to a lonely farm in search of such simple provisions as form the food of a Russian peasant, and contrived, without exciting suspicion, to obtain an additional black loaf for the maintenance of Anielka and Yaska. Every day his nets and lines produced a large supply of fish, both from the river and the meres; and as he seldom entered Khopol, and drank but little brandy, the risk of his mentioning the whereabouts of the fugitives in some drinking-bout of the young serfs, was but small. Still, the time hung heavily on Anielka's hands, though old Yaska endeavoured to enliven the hours by narrating such legends of the country as she had not told her nurslings at St. Petersburg. Still, Anielka had no books, no music, none of those graceful feminine occupations which make the flight of time so pleasant and imperceptible; nothing to do but to listen to the hoarse croaking of the bull-frogs, the boom of the bittern, or the shrill pipe of the marsh-bird, or to watch the sun go down and stain with a ruddier hue the yellow waters of the Borysthenes, and dye the weedy pools and inky meres with a sullen, blood-red radiance.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE summer of Russia, although short, is generally intensely hot, and as the days dragged on, long and scorchingly sultry, the slight shade which the reeds afforded could not keep off the burning rays of the sun, which fell with all their force on the turf hut, and called up reeking vapours, mephitic and subtle, from every plashy pond and muddy creek. The bull-frogs

croaked louder than ever, but the song of the birds was seldom heard in the miry fens. The fisher's nets and eel baskets were gorged with slimy spoil. Red and flaming, the almost tropical sun sank ever in the west as night came on. And when the sun sank, there rose up from the stagnant pools white, ghastly mists, that hovered like sheeted ghosts above the unwholesome meres that bred them, and blue lights danced with a phosphoric gleam over the dull waters, making Yaska and Stefann cross themselves and pray, for they thought that unblessed spirits were abroad in those fantastic meteors.

Without exercise or occupation, Anielka drooped more and more every day. Like a plant transplanted far from its native soil, she withered in the ungenial atmosphere, the foul miasma of the marsh, and looked daily more pallid and more frail. She never left the hut, for independently of the peril of walking in that tremulous morass, where a single false step might lead into some fathomless pit of slime, or some quagmire of mud and deep water, there were other dangers to be apprehended in that desolate district.

The majority of English readers may not perhaps be aware that a species of very large and voracious snake, whose habits appear to assimilate closely to those of the gigantic Mexican and South American reptiles which the Spaniards call the "Matatoro," or Bull-killer, is to be found among the reeds of the Borysthenes, and other rivers of Southern Russia. These serpents, of whose length, ravages, and tenacity of life a thousand legends are current among the peasantry, and anecdotes respecting whose devastations are to be found in various standard books of information on Russia, and especially in the works of Kohl, have not apparently attracted the attention of naturalists, and we are in possession of no data respecting their size or structure, save the semi-fabulous reports derived from the unlearned serfs of Malorossia. That these huge monsters exist, however, in small numbers, that they destroy quantities of sheep and oxen, and that the populations of whole villages often assemble for the chase and slaughter of a single one of these reptiles, is as undoubted as that there are crocodiles in the Nile, or sharks in the harbour of Port Royal. A serpent of this formidable tribe had appeared in the fens near Khopol, had done much damage among the flocks, and was known to have his lair among the marshes. Stefann brought back from Khopol the news that the tracks made by the bulky snake, and the stains of blood proceeding from a strangled

lamb he had carried away, were distinctly visible through the long grass through which the reptile had dragged his prey. Stefann added that Prince Jargonoff was about to organize a snake-hunt on a grand scale, intended to comprise the whole of the able-bodied males of the district, and designed, if possible, to track the gorged monster to his lair, and put an end to his devastations and his life. Stefann had also heard that Anielka's flight had caused a most energetic search for her, though the pursuit had been chiefly directed towards Kiew and the other neighbouring towns since no one could imagine that so delicate and fragile a being could have taken refuge in the pestilential swamps of the fen district. Stefann added that Prince Demetrius had headed the search after Anielka, had offered a reward for her capture, and was said to be in the state of a man possessed by an unquiet demon, unable to rest, always on horseback, and scouring the country, visiting every farm and hamlet for miles around. Jacob and Katinka, though greatly alarmed by Anielka's disappearance, were in a measure consoled by the thought that Yaska was with her nursling, and they had soon been dismissed by the prince, who had at first sent for them and subjected them to a strict interrogation, but who had directly convinced himself that they were as ignorant of Anielka's place of refuge as himself.

On the tenth evening after her arrival at the fisher's hut, Anielka complained of headache and illness. Her pulses throbbed with unnatural quickness, her eyes looked brighter than usual, her hand was dry and hot, and her temples burned like fire. Yaska became alarmed. She did not dare to send to Kiew, where the nearest physician lived, and her medical skill was slight. Still she could see that her young mistress was likely to become dangerously ill, and her faithful heart bled to think that her unhappy position debarred her from all the comforts and assistance so needed in the hour of sickness. The next morning, Anielka's eyes were still more brilliant, and looked disproportionably large from the wanness of her rapidly hollowed cheeks: her lips, too, were white and feverish. She had scarcely slept, and complained of the continual aching and throbbing of her burning head, which she laid on Yaska's lap, moaning like a sick child. Faster and faster did her pulses beat, as the day wore on, and all Yaska's simple remedies and fond nursing produced no good effect, save the sickly but grateful smile with which Anielka rewarded them. When the hot day drew near to its close, Anielka's condition became still

worse; her hands were hot, and nevertheless her skin was as parched as that of a wayfarer among the sandy deserts of Africa; and she complained that a sound like the hum of bees grew louder and louder, and filled her ears with its murmur. Yaska raised her up, and laid her on her lowly bed, and having smoothed the rude pillow on which her patient's beautiful head reposed, she sat down beside her, and covered her withered face, weeping silently, so as not to disturb Anielka.

All her worst fears were realized; the poison of malaria had fastened on its victim; her darling had caught the marsh fever, so deadly even to the seasoned inhabitants of the fens.

Evening gradually darkened around the hut, the last rays of the sun vanished below the horizon, and the whoop of the owl and the croak of the marsh reptiles seemed to unite in ominous chorus. Yaska sat still, hoping that Anielka was asleep, and that the slumber would refresh her, for the old nurse still clung to hope.

Soon after dark, Anielka stirred for the first time; she feebly moved her arm, and in a weak voice asked for Katinka. Old Yaska flew to her side, and addressed her in the same tender tone that had soothed her childish griefs. The faithful nurse was shocked to hear a hollow, ringing laugh, the very mockery of mirth, reply to her. There was foam on Anielka's lips, her eyes glared vacantly, and words wildly strung together fell in rapid incoherence from her tongue. Anielka was delirious, and in that state she remained throughout the live-long night, pillowed on Yaska's aged breast. Her ravings were terrible, and Yaska trembled as she saw the gentle being before her, now convulsed with all the fiery energy of a Pythoness, and uttering maledictions that sounded doubly awful when proceeding from one whose nature was so tender and forgiving, now pleading in tones of the most touching entreaty, and imploring mercy with a fervour that a savage might have been moved by. At one time she upbraided Klapka for his cowardly desertion of his affianced bride in the hour when she most needed a friend, at another she blessed and forgave him with the sweet placability of a dying martyr. Then she would fancy herself in the grasp of Demetrius, and would beg of him to spare her in such accents of agony, in such earnestness of supplication, that Stefann, who sat beside the fire in the outer chamber, wiped from his eyes the tears so rarely shed by a dogged Malorossian serf. And then it was not Demetrius, but the snake, that had clasped her in its fatal

folds, and she struggled and screamed in that horrible embrace, until the scene changed, and she would address words of fondness to old Jacob or Katinka, which would give place again to the most fearful curses on the race of Jargonoff, on the oppressors of her family, and the monarch under whose rule such deeds were done.

CHAPTER XXV.

An hour after daybreak the paroxysm ceased, and Anielka fell into a feverish slumber. She still muttered to herself at intervals; but the words were so low and indistinct that they did not reach old Yaska's ears. Leaving her on her humble couch, with her dark hair streaming in tangled luxuriance over the pillow, Yaska stole on tiptoe into the next room, where Stefann the fisherman, seated on an oaken settle, was engaged in mending a net.

"What do you think should be done?" asked Yaska, in a whisper.

Stefann shook his head moodily. "There is nothing to be done," he replied, in a tone almost as subdued as that of Yaska. "Those whom the marsh fever is to kill, die always on the third day."

"And those who recover?" said Yaska.

"They begin to mend on the third day," answered the fisher, with a firm conviction that communicated itself to Yaska; "the third day decides it all."

"But she should have remedies; if she could but see a doctor, his medicines might cure her easily," said Yaska, wringing her hands in perplexity.

Stefann put on that incredulous stare with which a peasant generally receives an opinion opposed to his prejudices.

"Doctors may do some good to the folk of the towns," said he; "they are useless in our fens. All the drugs in the world could not save one person from the marsh fever. Those who are to recover will recover, and those that are to die, will die!"

This reply, uttered positively and dogmatically, puzzled rather than convinced Yaska. She had lived too long in St. Petersburg not to have lost much of her faith in the dogged fatalism which the Russians have perhaps derived from the belief of their Asiatic conquerors in former ages; and she had seen instances in which lives had been unquestionably saved

by medical skill. But no man, perhaps, ever thoroughly shakes off his dread of the superstitions that frightened him in his nursery days; let his reason develop as it may, the old phantoms lord it to the last over his secret soul, and few of the most daring sceptics would fancy the ordeal of being compelled to pass a moonless night among the yews and headstones of a country graveyard, or shut in among the stone ladies and marble Templars of a grey old church, rich in tombs and monuments.

It was not surprising that an untaught old woman, bred up among a benighted race of beings, and schooled in childhood into the belief in a sort of vague and irregular predestination, which is common to the peasants of almost all remote and little visited countries, should feel herself affected by the fatalistic arguments of her nephew. But her love for Anielka triumphed over the stolid inertness of the credences of her youth.

"Stefann," she said, in a tone of authority, "you are my sister's son, and the last of my family. I charge you, as you value my blessing, to hasten to Kiew for a physician to save my darling."

The ties of kindred are much regarded in Russia, and the young fisherman was not unwilling to give up his own ideas, and take what he considered a needless trouble, for the sake of his old relative. But as he was laying aside his net and the ball of twine with which he had been repairing the defective meshes, another objection struck him.

"Prince Ivan will find out where she is hidden," said he.

"And what has she to fear now? What harm can Prince Ivan or his son do to my darling now?" asked Yaska, indignantly.

"Well!" rejoined the fisher, "I will get my skiff ready at once, and row as fast as I can to Kiew; and I promise you I'll bring back the doctor in my boat. It's a long way, but I will do my best for you, aunt Yaska, and the poor young lady." And Stefann resolutely stowed away his fishing gear in a corner, took up his felt cap, and prepared to sally forth.

"When shall you return? Remember, every hour is worth a gold mine!" said Yaska.

"Not much before evening," answered the fisher, as he left the hut; "it is a hard pull against the current coming back from Kiew, and my skiff will be overladen. Not that the doctor can be of much use. I fear the poor young creature is dying."

Low as these words were spoken, they fell upon Anielka's sensitive ear as distinctly as if they had been shouted through

a speaking-trumpet. She started from her troubled sleep like one who hears the summons of Azrael.

"Dying! who said I was dying?" she cried; "am I really dying? I am very young to die."

Yaska rushed sobbing into the chamber, and flung herself down on her knees by the bedside. Stefann, abashed and frightened, made the best of his way to the creek, jumped into his light skiff, cast the frail craft loose from the rope that moored her, and seizing the oars, rowed as he had never rowed before, forgetting all his prejudices, towards Kiew in search of a physician. Soon far away down the favouring current, and darting like an arrow between the reedy banks of the stream, did the skiff plough on through the waters of the Borysthenes, and the fisher plied his oars with all the force that his rude, kind heart could lend to his sturdy arms, as he sped upon his errand of mercy.

But not all the leechcraft of Christendom could avail to succour Anielka now. Even Yaska's eyes saw it plainly; the angel of death had set his mark upon her forehead. She lay helplessly upon her rustic bed, her dishevelled black hair floating around her like the tendrils of a wild vine. There was a flush on her usually white cheek, that came and went, ebbed and flowed, as the blood rushed rapidly to and from the citadel of life; and when Yaska took her hand in hers and clasped her wrist, Anielka's pulse was weak and slow, as if it, too, were wearied out, and longed to be at rest. All day the dying girl remained in the same state, now moaning deliriously, now slumbering from sheer exhaustion. Late in the afternoon the burning of her veins and the madness of fever abated; her hands became cooler, her ravings ceased, and she feebly complained of thirst.

"You are better, dearest!" said Yaska, as she held to her nursling's lips a glass of a cooling draught which she had distilled from herbs; "you are better, and will soon be well."

Alas! while Yaska forced herself to speak thus cheeringly, she knew it was only "a lightening before death." Anielka knew it too, and the sadness of her smile, so sickly, yet so kind, made Yaska's heart ache.

"Come here, my own Yaska!" said Anielka, in a voice so feeble as to be almost inaudible. "Nay, you need not pretend to be cheerful—it is of no use, dear old nurse! I know that I am dying. Listen to me now, for I feel that I have but little breath left, and my tired eyes are growing dazzled."

Yaska bent over her nursling, and the tears fell fast from her old eyes.

"You will love my father the better for my sake, when I am gone. Will you not, dear Yaska?" said Anielka.

Yaska's assent was inarticulate perhaps, but it was satisfactory.

"And Katinka, my own loved sister," said Anielka; "cherish her as you have cherished me. Guard *her* from evil, good Yaska, as you have guarded *me* from shame. Be unto her a watchful mother in the hour of danger, as you have been to me."

And Yaska bowed her aged head, and promised what her dying darling asked. Anielka's breath now came thickly and with pain; her bosom heaved convulsively, and her eye grew more brilliant with a strange and sudden light.

"And Eugene, Eugene Klapka! tell him, should you ever see him, my Yaska, that his Anielka loved him to the last, and forgave him, and blessed him with her dying breath. And oh, if he should be true; if it was not by his own will that he failed me in my direst need, oh tell him, dear Yaska, that I prayed as I died that my spirit might meet his among the starry thrones of heaven. If Eugene has not deserted me, we shall meet again, where oppressors rule not; and tell him, oh tell him, that by this thought, this hope, my death is robbed of half its bitterness."

Anielka's breathing became more and more difficult. She fixed her eyes on the blue sky, and prayed silently, while a tear rolled from among her dark eyelashes.

"Yaska!" she whispered, "what your love has done for me will not be lost. Blessings on you, dear nurse; your recompence is sure. God will reward you when all the wealth of Prince Jargonoff shall be as dust in the balance. Be good, I pray you, to my poor, poor old father!"

She murmured then some words of a bright and glorious vision that floated radiantly before her dim eyes, from which all the sights of earth were fading as a breath fades from the surface of a mirror. And so, with a heavenly smile upon her beautiful upturned face, Anielka died.

Yaska wept and knelt long, speechless and awe-struck, beside the deathbed of her whose pure soul had taken wing to seek its true home beyond the skies. At last the old woman rose, and with trembling hands proceeded to compose the limbs of the dead maiden into the statuelike and rigid repose

that befits the departed. She placed her own silver cross upon Anielka's breast, arranged four lighted tapers around the bed, covered the feet of the corpse with white drapery, and again knelt and prayed earnestly. Then she rose from her knees, and fearing lest on Stefann's return some report of the death of Anielka should be spread abroad, and be communicated with unfeeling bluntness to Jacob and Katinka, she determined at once to set off for Khopol, and apprise them of the sad event, with such simple art as her untaught mind could devise to save pain and trouble to those she loved. She set off at once by the usual path across the fens, leaving, in the pre-occupation of her thoughts, the door of the hut open. Yaska had nearly reached the limits of the morass, when she was alarmed by the report of firearms, and the shouts and trampling of a great company of people, who were beating the bushes and reedy thickets of the swamps. Turning to the left, she succeeded in eluding the approaching party, and made her way with all the speed of foot she could command towards Khopol. Not only in her hurry and agitation had she omitted to secure the door, but she had not seen the grim head that raised itself above the rushes as she left the hut, and peered with glittering eyes into the interior of the dwelling.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE troop of persons whose halloos and musket-shots had caused Yaska's alarm, consisted of a hundred peasants, armed with spears, clubs, and axes, and headed by Prince Jargonoff himself, who carried a double-barreled rifle in his hand. Demetrius accompanied his father, but with an air of contemptuous lassitude. Several officers from Kiew were also among the advancing troop. This assemblage had been convened by Prince Jargonoff for his long projected snake hunt. The serpent which lurked among the swamps had done great mischief to the cattle, and it was with the double inducement of ridding the country of a pest and of affording an amusement to his military visitors, that Prince Jargonoff had set the expedition on foot. The reptile had been surprised in the vicinity of a sheepfold, had been pursued, and slightly wounded, but had escaped into the fens. Determined that such a scourge to the district should not elude them, the hunters steadily advanced into the morasses, beating the reeds as they proceeded,

and keeping cautiously to the paths that, like causeways in a lake, bridged the foul pools and tenacious mud of the fens. The track of the wounded reptile was plainly visible in a long streak of blood and slime that tinged the rank grass of the hillocks, and stained the brown moss and sable peat of the morass. Deep, deep into the rush-grown waste, the hunters pushed on, shouting and laughing, and easily following the broad trail of the bleeding snake. Thus they proceeded, until they came within sight of the hut of the fisher, Stefann. The same dark-red streak was visible upon the threshold of the open door. It was evident that the monster had taken refuge there. There was a halt among the hunters, and all their clamour and loquaciousness was hushed. Those who had been hitherto the foremost, now shrank from the task of entering the hut, and grappling with their formidable foe in his chosen lair. No one stirred. The officers, who had previously regarded the chase as a mere diversion, now looked serious, and drew their swords as they approached the door, which they still hesitated to pass. But Demetrius, with his usual sneer curling his lip, sauntered forward, carrying a fowling-piece in his hand so carelessly as to show that he had only taken it up in compliance with the prevailing fashion for engaging in the armed pursuit of a creature he affected to despise. He gave an expressive shrug and a scornful look at the hesitating crowd, turned on his heel, and entered the hut alone. Prince Ivan strode towards the threshold; the others were emboldened and followed him. But a frightful cry burst from the interior of the cottage, and Demetrius rushed wildly out, dropping his gun, which exploded in its fall. The young Prince staggered out into the open air with starting eyeballs and convulsed face, like those of a murderer confronted with his victim. He caught hold of a peasant's arm to support himself, and pressed his hand to his forehead—"It is too horrible!" he gasped out, in reply to the numerous questions addressed to him. Prince Ivan's courage was roused, and, followed by a stream of peasants and officers, he rushed into the hut, and penetrated into the inner chamber, when a cry of horror broke from every breast. Pale and calmly beautiful, Anielka lay upon the bed, her gentle eyes closed, and a smile, such as seraphs might wear, upon her sweet face. But upon the bed also, encircling the body with its huge coils, lay the enormous snake, with its hideous head upraised, its red eyes flaming on the intruders, and its wide jaws distended as if in the very act

of devouring the corpse. Disturbed by the shout of the new comers, irritated by its wound, and fairly brought to bay, the lengthy reptile unwound with marvellous rapidity the folds of its body that had encircled the dead maiden, and sprang, hissing and open-mouthed, among its clamorous enemies. The struggle was a fearful one. The windows were broken by the sharp report of the fire-arms, the room was filled with smoke, and the flashing of the hatchets and sword-blades was for some moments incessant. The resistance of the dying reptile was amazing; it writhed and twisted among its foes, hissing angrily, twining around the limbs of all within its reach, biting furiously at those who hacked it down, and lashing the ground with its powerful tail. Several men were severely injured before the serpent's despairing efforts were vanquished, and even when hewed to pieces, its mutilated fragments dragged themselves, bloody and quivering, along the floor. By the orders of Prince Jargonoff the body of Anielka was placed upon a litter roughly constructed of boughs and poles, and borne, covered with white drapery, by four of the peasants to the village of Khopol, where Yaska had long since arrived to bear her melancholy tidings to the bereaved father and sister.

CHAPTER XXVII.

No description can paint the agonizing grief of Jacob Petrovich and Katinka, when old Yaska told the melancholy tale of their beloved Anielka's sufferings, and the death that had relieved her from them; nor their anguish, when, shortly afterwards, the bearers of the rude litter arrived at the cottage with their sad burden. The sorrow of the doting father and fond sister was so profound and heartrending that it was respected by the most rugged of their uncultivated neighbours, and even George Muller felt ashamed for a time to intrude upon the sacred privacy of their grief. Prince Jargonoff, hard-hearted though he was, could not help being much shocked at the horrible circumstances of the event, and he treated the mourning sister and parent of Anielka with more humanity and consideration than he usually exhibited. Indeed, when, a month later, the imperial permission arrived for the marriage of George Muller to Katinka Petrovich, Prince Ivan postponed the compulsory wedding until some weeks more should have elapsed, and Muller, though discontented, was compelled to

submit. Meanwhile the war went on, with the same results as before, and the triumph gained by the Turks at Silistria, together with the anticipated expedition of the allies against Sebastopol, bade fair amply to avenge the massacre of Sinope and the seizure of Wallachia.

Mark, on several occasions, had visited the neighbouring towns, and once had reached the sea-coast, but without having been able to discover any available means of escape from the country. He visited Katinka, however, as often as was consistent with his and her safety, and most cordially shared in her sorrow and that of her afflicted father. Anielka was buried beneath a cypress tree in the small cemetery of Khopol, and every evening old Jacob and Katinka repaired thither to place a fresh garland of flowers on the green turf over her grave.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

It was the first of November. Jacob and Katinka were sitting silently over the peat fire in their quiet cottage. Yaska sat nearer the door, busily plying one of those primitive distaffs, the form of which has been handed down unchanged from classical times, such as Lucretia used, and such as were represented in the pictures of the Eumenides. The weather without was not of a nature to inspire cheerful thoughts. Every few minutes a strong gust of wind would rush howling through the groves, stripping off such of the brown leaves as yet clung to the withered boughs, and tossing around the dead branches and broken twigs that lay at the feet of the bare, melancholy trees. The sky was leaden and dull. The clouds that covered the heavens with a grey canopy, save where the feeble sun was attempting to break their phalanx, looked lowering and dark, and seemed as if fraught rather with snow than rain. The short autumn of Russia was evidently over, and the iron reign of winter was about to begin. Katinka looked wretched and despondent. Time had blunted in some degree the poignant grief caused by Anielka's death, and chastened the paroxysms of woe into a calmer sense of sorrow and regret; while the hope and confidence Katinka felt that her separation from that lamented sister was but for a few brief years, had soothed the pangs she had felt, by the prospect of an eternal re-union with the lost one. But poor Katinka had afflictions of her own. The clemency of Prince Jargonoff was exhausted: he had

refused to allow any longer delay, and in a few days George Muller was to claim his reluctant bride. Hope had deserted Katinka. Mark Forster had not appeared during the last month, and escape from the hateful marriage in store for her seemed an idle dream. Already the women of the village were making those elaborate preparations for the cumbrous feast and wearisome ceremonies which accompany a wedding among all semi-civilized nations, and which gradually vanish and fall into disuse as education dissipates the taste for the barbarous and the grotesque. But while Katinka sat, hopeless, but silent and uncomplaining, the hour of deliverance was at hand. A quick step was heard without; the latch of the outer door was suddenly lifted, and a man dressed in the coarse garb of a herdsman entered. Yaska let fall her distaff with an involuntary cry, as she recognised the features of Mark. Katinka sprang up to greet her lover, and Jacob rose slowly from his chair, and held out both his trembling hands to his young friend. The young Englishman was radiant with joy; and as soon as he had communicated to the father and daughter the good news he had brought, the almost extinct light of hope beamed in Katinka's eyes. Yaska became positively incautious in her vociferations of delight, and a faint tinge of colour mounted to old Jacob's ashen cheek. Mark had at last succeeded in hiring a small Greek coasting craft, which lay moored four miles below the town of Nicholaev, in the broad embouchure formed by the Dnieper as it mingles with the waters of the Black Sea. The captain of this little vessel had agreed, for a bribe of forty gold imperials, to transport the whole party of fugitives to the Crimea, and to place them safely on shore at Balaklava, where the allied army would afford them an efficient protection, and whence they could easily procure a passage on board some transport or merchantman, homeward-bound, and reach England by Christmas. England! even old Jacob's heart throbbed high as he thought of soon treading that free shore, and leaving for ever behind him the empire of slavery and wrong, the empire whose laws sanctified the murder of his spotless child! And Katinka smiled through her tears, like a glimpse of spring sunshine, as Mark spoke of the future happy days in store for them in his native land, and the safe and pleasant English home that should teach them to forget their sufferings in Russia. But there was one object in Khopol from which it was as hard for Jacob or Katinka to tear themselves away as if their very heart-strings had been riveted to it—Anielka's

humble grave. It seemed to the fond father and sister of the dead girl a cruel desertion to abandon her silent resting-place, to allow her tomb to be uncared for and neglected, and to leave behind them, mouldering beneath the hateful soil of that fatal district, her in whose early grave so many of their freshest hopes and dearest affections had been buried. Mark pleaded long and earnestly; he appealed to Jacob's love for his surviving daughter; he reminded Katinka of the odious marriage into which she was about to be forced, of the brutal nature of Muller, and the success which in a few days would crown his schemes; and at last his arguments prevailed, and the old man and the maiden agreed to submit themselves to his guidance. But Yaska was more obstinate in her boundless love for Anielka. She refused to leave her dead darling alone among foes and strangers; and Katinka was obliged to unite all her efforts to those of Jacob, before the old woman could be induced to give a grudging consent to a departure that would separate her from the tomb that held the mortal remains of the being she had loved above all that the earth contained. Mark then urged on Katinka the danger of losing time; and, aided by Yaska, the half smiling, half weeping girl busied herself with the simple preparations needed for the journey. A leathern valise was hastily packed, and this Mark threw upon his shoulder, leaving a smaller package to be carried by Yaska. A few clothes, some ornaments of small value, and a few books and other trifling articles that had belonged to Anielka, and were now regarded with the affectionate veneration with which the relics of the beloved are cherished, constituted all the baggage of the family. Mark left the cottage alone, having indicated to Jacob the place where the cars were hidden, and where he should await them. In a few minutes, Jacob, Katinka, and Yaska left the house by the garden gate, and, avoiding the village, passed through the cemetery, where the gilt crosses glittered on every tomb, and where the cypress tree beneath which Anielka lay gave back a mournful sighing, as the wind waved its branches, that sounded like nature's requiem for the departed. They three knelt down and prayed beside the lowly grave, while their tears fell like rain upon the green sod that covered it. On the small wooden cross which rose above the grave was carved by Stefann's hand the one word, "Anielka." On this cross Katinka placed a wreath of the last flowers of the cottage garden—the final offering of an undying love. At the gate of the cemetery the three turned their heads once

more to take a lingering glance at the deserted tomb, and to breathe once more a farewell to the spot. And it seemed to them as if the wailing boughs of the cypress tree responded with a murmuring sound. In a brief space Katinka and her aged companions reached the place where Mark awaited them. Two of the lightest of the basket-work cars of the country, each drawn by two strong ponies, and conducted by a reckless-looking horse-herdsman, were hidden behind a thorny grove. Each of these cars could only hold two persons besides the driver. Jacob and the old nurse were placed in one of these vehicles, while Mark and Katinka occupied the other. It had been agreed upon, that, to avoid creating unnecessary suspicion, in case an alarm should be spread of their flight among the towns of the Borysthenes, the waggons should travel by different routes. Jacob and Yaska were to proceed by the most direct road, crossing the river near Borispol, and hurrying on towards the sea. As they were certain to reach Nikolaev some hours before Mark, who was to travel by the more circuitous road of Zolotonocha and Elisavetgrad, it was settled that on reaching the beach where the boat of the coaster was to be in waiting, Jacob should give the word, "*Inghilterra!*" go on board at once, and await in safety the arrival of Mark and Katinka. The herdsmen who drove the cars, and whom Mark had bribed handsomely, had engaged to find, among the stations of their comrades, continual relays of fresh horses, and to travel with the utmost rapidity possible upon the rough but level roads of the steppe.

The whips cracked, the stalwart shaggy ponies galloped furiously off, and the light cars bounded swiftly along the rugged way. The journey of Mark and Katinka was a rapid and fortunate one. The horses, full of fire and agility, seldom slackened their swinging gallop, and when one pair of ponies announced by their reeking coats and panting sides that weariness had overcome their wild strength, some herd of half-savage steeds was sure to be near, from which a few roubles, and the freemasonry prevailing among herdsmen, contrived to procure a couple of fresh animals, ready to resume the headlong pace which their tired compeers were unable any longer to keep up.

Carefully avoiding Elisavetgrad and the other large towns, where the want of passports would have caused the arrest and detention of the fugitives, Mark and Katinka pursued their way unchallenged and unchecked, only occasionally halting for

an hour to partake of such humble refreshment as the cottagers of the steppes could afford them, and dashing on, through the shades of night and through the light of day, at a speed, and with a perseverance, rarely surpassed by even the imperial couriers. The cold was considerable upon the bleak steppes, swept as they were by a keen north wind, but Mark's thoughtfulness had provided a quantity of furs and warm wrappings, and Katinka suffered but slightly from the increasing inclemency of the weather. Yet she was nearly worn out by the incessant fatigue, when they at last skirted the long-looked-for walls of Nicholaev, and approached the bay in which the Greek vessel was lying. Leaving the road, the car now traversed a species of open down, and suddenly stopped upon the verge of a steep and lofty cliff of limestone, that towered over the rippling water of the bay, where, not a quarter of a mile from the shore, lay a small craft, whose white sails hung lazily festooned around their yards, while the striped Greek flag floated at her mast-head. Touching the narrow beach, into whose shingles her bow was driven, lay a boat, in which there sat two red-capped sailors, listlessly leaning on their oars. Mark sprang out, assisted Katinka to alight, and giving the driver his promised recompence, thanked him heartily for his diligence and fidelity. It was a hard task for Mark to descend the slippery flight of stairs that led down the face of the limestone cliff, bearing the slender baggage in one hand, and with the other aiding the steps of Katinka, who was timid and frightened, never having so much as seen a hill in her whole life before, spent as it had been among the interminable levels of Russia. They had just reached the beach, and Katinka, leaning on Mark's arm, was picking her way among the rocks and shingles, when the galloping of horses and a loud shout made the lovers turn their heads and look up. On the cliff above them appeared a patrol of Cossack horsemen, brandishing their steel-pointed lances above their heads, and uttering yells of rage and disappointment. These wild riders, with their vindictive gestures, and strange garb, and their chargers' rough manes streaming in the wind, looked like a band of mounted goblins, as they stood out in bold relief against the red sunset. And among them glared, like that of a baffled demon, the furious face of George Muller. The shouts of the Cossacks made the sailors in the boat start up and grasp their oars in alarm.

"Quick, quick, my lads!" cried Mark, running towards

them, and flinging Katinka's valise into the boat: "Inghilterra! Inghilterra!"

The men forbore to push off, and stood staring alternately at Mark and the pursuers, two or three of whom had dismounted, and were descending the cliff. Mark caught up Katinka like a feather in his arms, placed her in the boat, pushed the light skiff so vigorously that it shot two or three fathoms from the shore, and rushing into the sea, scrambled on board and clutched the tiller. The sailors bent to their oars, and the boat flashed away through the rippling water like a sword-fish. A howl from the Cossacks greeted this manœuvre, and several musket-shots were discharged in rapid succession. Four or five balls whizzed over the boat, and one leaden messenger lodged itself in a plank between Mark and Katinka. The Greeks were alarmed, and but for Mark's resolute demeanour would have pulled for the shore and surrendered, as the Cossacks shouted to them to do. But Mark, encouraging them to the utmost of his power, and swearing to stab the first man who should offer to obey the mandate of the soldiers, the sailors pulled on, through a shower of balls that splashed thickly around the boat. The skiff advanced, and seemed to be fast getting out of gunshot range, when George Muller, who was a very expert marksman, took a musket from a Cossack, aimed coolly and steadily, and fired. The bullet passed through Mark's cap, grazing his temple so closely as to draw a few drops of blood. Katinka gave a scream, believing her lover to be seriously wounded. But Mark, whose elasticity of character was now restored, stood up in the boat, and scornfully waved his cap pierced by the ball, in signal of farewell. Muller threw down the gun with a savage curse. In a minute or two more the fugitives stood on the deck of the Greek vessel, where the crew were toiling at the capstan. The captain, a grizzly-bearded Hydriote, welcomed Mark and Katinka on board, and then turned to the men and urged them to be quick with the anchor. The Cossacks had dispersed. Some were galloping along the cliffs, three or four were descending the heights in the direction of a fishing hamlet, probably in search of a boat, and the rest were busied around one of those tall beacons which are erected along the seaboard to spread an alarm in case of invasion. The anchor was weighed at last, and the sails were shaken out as rapidly as possible.

"You were just in time, signore!" said the captain, with a grim smile, as he pointed to the soldiers.

"Just in time!" answered Mark, cheerily; "but we may as well go below. We shall find the other passengers in the cabin, I suppose?"

"The other passengers! what are you talking of, signore?" said the Greek.

"This lady's father, and the old nurse, to be sure," answered Mark, much disturbed. "The old man and the woman who must have arrived here this morning, and gave the word, 'Inghilterra;' you know."

"No one has come, except yourself, signore; ask my mate or the crew, if you like, whether we have seen a living soul this day before you came!" replied the Hydriote.

"O my father! my poor father!" cried Katinka with a piercing scream; "he has fallen again into the hands of his enemies, and what will become of him! My poor, poor father! reft of both his daughters! I will go back; Mark, loose me! let me go! I will return. Let them treat me as they will, my father shall *not* be left alone to suffer on the soil of slavery!" And the frantic girl would have thrown herself into the sea in the wild impulse, at all risks, to sacrifice herself, rather than desert her father, had not Mark gently but firmly restrained her. The vessel began to glide through the water like a wild duck. "Wait! Oh! at least wait for him here, dearest Mark!" shrieked Katinka, struggling to get free from her lover's hold; "do not desert him. He and Yaska may arrive yet."

But just at that instant the Cossacks fired the beacon, and a tall column of red and quivering flame rose boldly up against the darkening horizon. "There is not a moment to be lost!" exclaimed the captain; "in a couple of hours that light will have brought down a gun-boat from Nicholaev upon us. Be quick, be quick, men! every stout pull at a rope is worth a life just now!"

Mark caught up Katinka in his arms. "We cannot stay here longer," he said; "and if we remain to be taken by the Russian cruisers, do you not think that your father's sorrows would be rendered more bitter by your own recapture? We cannot aid him now, save by prayer. Come, dearest; hereafter you will thank me for this violence." So saying, he carried the maiden down the narrow companion-ladder as easily as if she had been a child, and placing her in the cabin, where she sank sobbing on a couch, he returned to the deck.

The light craft spread her white sails to the favouring breeze

as a bird expands his wings, and soon the rushing and foaming of the water resounded merrily around her gliding prow, while the figures of the Cossacks, who galloped and shook their lances in the red glare of the beacon fire, became gradually more and more fantastic and indistinct, and at last disappeared altogether, as the vessel emerged into the open sea, and ploughed the trackless waters in the direction of the Crimea.

CHAPTER XXIX.

It is now time to return to Yanos and Klapka, who, with the division to which they were attached, had been throughout the summer engaged in hostilities upon the Danube. When the beaten army that had besieged the Turkish fortress of Silistria was forced to make a hasty and ignominious retreat, the Pole and the Esthonian were among those who fell back through the pestilential morasses of the Dobruscha, and recrossed the Danube in dismay. Yanos, though with the instinct of a freeman he had shrunk from the long servitude of the Russian military career, was a soldier of Nature's making, and bore the hardships of the campaign as stoically as he confronted its dangers. Bred a hunter, inured to the greatest exertions and the most complete exposure to rough weather, the Esthonian laughed at fatigue and privations, while in the day of battle his indomitable valour far surpassed the sullen courage of his comrades. Yanos would have been promoted, had it not been for the singular haughtiness and independence of his character, which not all the discipline of the imperial service could crush into the stereotyped mould of its machine-like servility. The Esthonian gave continual cause of complaint to the officers of his regiment, who hated to see a soldier retain any sentiment of manliness and self-respect, and it needed all the *prestige* of his remarkable daring and strength to save him from being flogged. As it was, the colonel determined to wait till the war should be over, and bravery no more at a premium, before having the peculiarities of Yanos eradicated by the agency of a few hundred strokes of the executioner's knout. Klapka, on the other hand, knowing himself wronged and humiliated, and feeling the instinctive disgust for his coarse and brutish comrades which his own superior education and finer feelings inevitably caused, was utterly miserable, taciturn, and passive. He fought, but it was as an automaton fights,—

without fear, but without either dash or spirit. His mind was continually distracted by his natural fears for Anielka's safety. He had remained in garrison at Kiew during a part of the time which the Petrovich family spent on Prince Jargonoff's estate, but had been too closely watched, and too jealously confined to the barracks, to have been able either to visit Khopol or to write to Anielka. The first opportunity which presented itself for leaving the army was, when the Russians, beaten and discouraged, fell back from the siege of Silistria. Then Klapka deserted. Anxious to learn the fortunes of Anielka, and firmly resolved to repair to Khopol, and persuade her, at all hazards, to become his wife and fly with him to some foreign country, the Polish noble set off on foot, almost penniless, haggard, shoeless, and in tattered garb, yet animated by strong love and a firm purpose to return to Kiew, and thence to reach Khopol. At Galatz, however, the count was arrested, recognised as a deserter, and tried before the summary tribunal of a court-martial.' Here, for the first time, his birth did him service. The punishment he had incurred was that of death, but his judges demurred to ordering the execution of the chief of one of the most illustrious families of Poland. The responsibility was one they were unwilling to charge themselves with. Eugene Klapka bore a great name. His Imperial Majesty, Nicholas, might want him as a tool some day; the knout and the bullet were chastisements fit only for those from whose services the Czar had nothing to hope. Such was the reasoning of the judges! Klapka was spared these, therefore, but was sent, as a criminal, to work in irons upon the fortifications of Odessa. And on the ramparts of Odessa, loaded with chains, clad in rags, hungry, beaten, and linked to a degraded wretch whose crimes have brought him to the same level as Klapka's virtues, does Eugene Klapka still live and labour among galley-slaves and the refuse of the army and prisons. And yet, in this scene of suffering, want, and shame, his spirit remains unbroken, his eye retains its brightness, and his heart its courage; for, totally ignorant of the fate of the merchant's family, and of the sad death of his promised bride, he hopes on still, patiently and bravely, never relinquishing his trust that he shall see Anielka again, and claim her for his own. Poor fellow! he may see her again, but it must be in another and a brighter world. Still let him hope on! and may no one undeceive him, or take from him the last solace of his weary life! Yanos, the Esthonian, was one of those soldiers attached to

General Dannenberg's *corps d'armée*, who were hurried on, as rapidly as post-horses could draw across the steppes the light waggons full of armed men, to reinforce Prince Menschikoff in the Crimea, and to attempt to exact a bloody reckoning for the Russian defeat at the Alma.

CHAPTER XXX.

It was after dark on the evening of the fourth of November that the Greek vessel which bore Mark and Katinka approached the Crimean shores. The lights that burned in the town and in the citadel were unusually brilliant, as the schooner neared Sebastopol. A far-distant sound of choral melody stole over the waters, and reached the bark as she approached the shore, and afterwards a faint shout was heard. That shout proceeded from the throats of sixty thousand Russian soldiers, maddened by a lavish ration of brandy, stimulated by the presence of two young archdukes, two princes of the sacred race of Romanoff, and inflamed by the harangues of their priests, who promised them a paradise as the reward of their exertions in the approaching attack upon the unguarded post commanded by the veteran Sir De Lacy Evans. The schooner neared the land, and hove to, while the captain ordered the boat to be lowered. Mark strenuously objected to this, that the bargain had stipulated that the fugitives should be landed at Balaklava. The captain rejoined that Russian steamers were continually emerging from the narrow channel left in the harbour; that in the event of his anchoring and remaining where he was till daybreak, he would run great risk of being overhauled by some cruiser from Sebastopol; while, if he sailed for Balaklava, he should be in danger of being fired upon by the allied ships of war, or of being run down by one of the many transport steamers. He concluded by giving Mark the option of landing at once, or not at all, since his intention was to stand out to sea without delay. Mark's natural impatience prevailed over his caution, and in half an hour more he stood with Katinka upon the Crimean beach, while the sailors pulled away towards the vessel again. There were a half-dozen of Tartar cottages nestling in a little ravine near the spot where the fugitives had landed, and Mark, who had acquired a smattering of the language of this strange people, soon found a Tartar guide, who promised, for a dollar, to conduct the wanderers

safely to the English camp. The Tartar threw the light baggage of the fugitives upon his shoulders, and set off at a round pace through the darkness that hovered over the steep and stony valleys. The journey was a long one, however, and either from ignorance or stupidity, some hours after midnight found Mark and Katinka following their uncertain guide through the swampy valley of the Tchernaya, and at no very great distance from that silent city of the forgotten dead, which has since become a name of pride and terror in every English home—Inkerman. Katinka was worn out with fatigue, and would have sunk, but for the support which Mark's firm shoulder afforded her. So they advanced, winding and turning, until in a stony glen they came unexpectedly upon a line of red watch-fires, around the largest of which a picquet of infantry were resting on their arms, while sentinels were dimly seen stretching in faintly-dotted line along the valley. The weapons and accoutrements of the soldiers of the picquet shone brilliantly in the glowing fire-light, which fell also on their stern faces and flat-topped bonnets of felt.

"Yonder the Ingliz!" whispered the Tartar guide, with all the triumph which a stupid man assumes when he has succeeded in an enterprise.

Mark, supporting Katinka, advanced towards the central fire, eager to be among his countrymen. In his haste he overlooked a sentinel who was pacing to and fro, near where a small heap of thorny bushes and roots were blazing brightly.

"Who goes there?" cried the soldier, *not* in English, but in *Russian*.

Mark and Katinka felt the life-blood rush rapidly to their hearts. They were among the wolves of the Emperor. The sentinel challenged again. "Who goes there?" he asked, and the click of the gun-lock followed as he brought the long, bright-barrelled piece to his shoulder.

Mark threw himself before Katinka, but not before the sentinel had caught sight of her features, just visible within the illumined circle. With marvellous presence of mind he resumed his solitary walk, and shouldered his rifle.

"Pass, friend, and all's well!" he exclaimed in a loud, steady tone; and several of the soldiers of the picquet, who had started forward in apprehension of a surprise, now listlessly fell back to their former positions, never dreaming of suspecting any trick from so stout a comrade as bold Yanos, the Esthonian. The Tartar guide, perceiving his blunder, had flung himself on

the ground, and crawled away like a lizard along the ravine. Mark and Katinka stood still. After a few instants, Yanos approached them. The fire shone upon his lion-like face, and they knew him well. "Katinka Petrovich," said the Esthonian, in a smothered tone, "is this man your husband, that you are with him here by night, without father, brother, or sister?"

Katinka blushed, but replied composedly, "No, Gospodin Yanos, Mark is not my husband, but—but—"

"He soon is to be?" said Yanos, in an under tone, but still a stern one; "and if so, where is your father? I left him in an hour of trouble."

"He is in the hands of his persecutors; at least I fear so," answered Katinka, with a sob of irrepressible grief.

"And his child has left him so, and left her sister too, for the sake of a young English spy?" said Yanos, sneeringly.

Mark's blood boiled "Yanos," he said, angrily, "you are here in the midst of your comrades, among whom the folly of a blind guide has led us. In a moment you will doubtless call aloud to the ruffians sitting round yonder fire, to seize on Katinka, and to bind or kill me, I care not which, if I am to be torn from my betrothed wife. Now I tell you to your face, Esthonian, that what you meditate is a foul and treacherous deed, but not so foul or base as to asperse the motives and actions of Katinka, or to brand me with the name of spy."

The broad breast of Yanos heaved painfully. His eagle eyes were fastened on the Englishman's face as if to search for some sign of shame or fear. But they saw none. The Esthonian turned to Katinka. "If you are without blame, and your lover is no spy, tell me how are you here?"

Then, hurriedly, but in moving accents, Katinka told her tale, of their sufferings at Khopol, of Anielka's flight and death, and of Jacob's probable recapture, along with Yaska.

Yanos heard the story with some signs of emotion. "I saved your life last spring upon the Neva. Will you speak a word with me now alone?" said he, in a guttural but broken voice.

Katinka assented, and moved a few paces on in the gloom, while Mark watched her with jealous eyes. For some moments the soldier did not speak. Then he looked Katinka full in the face. "I love you!" said he. Katinka started. "I love you," went on the Esthonian; "I loved you from the hour when I saved you from a cold grave beneath the icy Neva. I

have dreamed of your image for months; in battle and in bivouac, in the forest and in the field, have I thought of your blue eyes and your sunny smile. Now choose, Katinka Petrovich, between Yanos the Esthonian hunter, and yonder Englishman. I am but a poor woodsman, it is true," he added, and there was something very touching and sweet in the sad music of that deep, powerful voice. "I cannot speak to you in foreign tongues, nor talk to you of the lore of books. I know nothing. I have nothing!" and the form of the Esthonian dilated into still grander proportions as he spoke, and with his flashing eyes and Titan face he looked the very type of a hero. "But I am a man!" he continued, and he spoke proudly: "I am a man; I have a heart to offer that never knew either fear or guile, and I have strength enough of arm and soul to place her whom I love high above scorn and injury. Choose between me and yonder Englishman. To-morrow we fight with his countrymen. Accept me, and I will leave the battle, an officer, or not leave it at all! Refuse me, and—" The Esthonian hesitated, his chest heaved, and he fixed his eyes on Katinka with an ardour that frightened her.

"Dear, dear friend!" she exclaimed, "Yanos, do not make me curse the day on which you saved me from death! Do not make me wish that I had been laid, cold and dead, beneath the ice of the Neva, rather than lived to fall into the hands of him who saved me before. Spare me, Yanos! have mercy on me. Others have been very hard with me. I love Mark; nay, frown not. I loved him long before I saw you, and it is unjust to hate him for what is not his fault. Be noble as of old, Yanos! be generous! We have suffered very much. You saw us in our happy home, on the last night on which we were at peace. My sister is dead, my father is a slave; I have been very wretched! O be merciful to me, Yanos, and I will ever love and bless you as a friend and a brother."

It was terrible to see the tempest of warring emotions that shook the strong man in whose hands lay Katinka's fate. He trembled like an aspen, and his face was wellnigh convulsed as the meaner and the nobler passions strove for the mastery in his mind. At last he looked up and relaxed his frowning brow. From his quick blue eyes flashed the radiance of untaught, inborn honour—of such native chivalry as would have graced the proudest paladin. Silently he led the way back to where Mark stood. "Follow me, both of you!" said he. "You are free! Hist! not a word. Your lives depend upon your

silence." Yanos led the way, guided the lovers over the bridge that spanned the Tchernaya, passed on across the valley, and finally stopped at the foot of a hill covered with loose rocks and slabs of slaty stone. High up the slope burned some faint watch-fires. "Those are the English lines!" said Yanos. As he spoke, the sound of wheels, and something like the deep rumble of artillery, drawn along a road, came feebly up the valley, and the Esthonian looked disturbed. "Once there, you are safe!" said he, pointing to the heights; "it is near dawn now—too near! Linger not, I warn you, on your path, for you know not what is behind you!"

He waved his hand and turned away. Katinka caught his hand, and kissed it gratefully.

"Blessings on you, kind friend," she said; "I will pray for you to the last day of my life."

"Pray for me to-morrow night, then," said Yanos, in a strange tone, "if your Church commands prayers for the dead. Farewell." And, cutting short Mark's thanks by the abruptness of his departure, the Esthonian strode away into the mist.

To scale the hill that intervened between them and the English outposts, was for Mark and Katinka no easy task. The loose blocks of stone and the dim light made their progress necessarily very slow; and before they were half way up the hill they distinctly heard the rumbling of the tumbrils and gun-carriages along the Tchernaya road renewed. They had nearly crested the cliff, when Mark stopped short, and listened intently. On the Tchernaya road, winding through the valley, was distinctly audible the tramp of a great body of marching men. The sound approached nearer and nearer to the foot of the hill; and the smothered voices of a number of people conversing in a subdued tone were heard, mingling with the low metallic clank of arms and accoutrements.

Then Mark started from the repose he had indulged in for a few minutes. "Quick, my Katinka!" he exclaimed; "the bloodhounds are behind us, but there are friends at hand."

Half leading, half dragging the wearied girl up the steep brow, Mark approached the nearest watch-fire.

"Who goes there?" challenged a sleepy sentry, starting from the rock against which he had been leaning, and bringing his musket to his shoulder.

"A friend—an Englishman!" answered Mark.

"Give the countersign!" answered the sentinel, cocking his rifle.

'I don't know it. I have but just escaped from the enemy," answered Mark. "You may see there are only two of us—one man and one woman. Call your officer; I have important news to tell him."

"Then tell it, and be quick," said a man, wrapped in a long great-coat, which he unbuttoned to show his epaulettes, as he advanced towards Mark.

Mark could hardly believe that the speaker was a British officer. A torn red coat, stained by mire and clay to a dozen mingling hues, regimental trowsers patched with scraps of blanketing, a frowsy foraging-cap, a pair of muddy highlows, and a ragged sash, gave the leader of the party more the look of a bandit than of anything else; and there was little but the frayed and tarnished bullion on his shoulders to vouch for his rank. Mark hastily told his tale, and declared his conviction that a great attack was preparing, and that a very powerful Russian column was advancing by the Tchernaya road to take the English by surprise. The officer heard these tidings with amazement, but instantly took the precaution of sending off one of his men to announce the movement in the valley to the general in command. Before, however, the messenger had proceeded many yards, a challenge, a cheer, and a few dropping shots, were followed by a rattling volley of musketry, and the loose stones rolling down the slippery hill-side, increased the din and confusion.

The English were awakened, and though taken by surprise, fought with that cool, indomitable courage that has never yet failed them, while the Russians, swarming like bees up the steep, endeavoured to overpower the enemy by the weight of numbers. The officer in command of the outpost had scarcely time to thank Mark for his warning, when the whole line was hotly engaged. Mark withdrew Katinka from the immediate scene of the action, and placed her in a hollow between rocks, on the edge of a lonely bluff at some little distance, and where no stray bullet could easily reach her. Standing beside her, he leaned upon a projecting stone, and looked eagerly down into the glens below. The darkness had now given place to the glimmering light of dawn, and Mark could distinguish column upon column of the sombre-looking Russian infantry, scaling the hill with a vigour and audacity that boded ill for the assailed. While the platoon firing of musketry, the dropping shots of skirmishers, and the roar of cannon, mingled with the shouts of sixty thousand infuriated men, Mark strained

his eyes in vain in the attempt to catch sight of the coming succour which it seemed could alone save the handful of British troops that crowned the heights from being swept away by the torrent. The Russians mounted the hill in masses, yelling like raging wolves. Mark looked on them, and trembled for his few devoted countrymen, on whom it devolved to check this fierce assault.

But the task was gallantly and gloriously fulfilled. As fast as the enemy mounted the hill the murderous fire of the Minié rifles thinned his ranks, and a line of steady bayonets received and bore back those who ventured to engage in closer combat. But still, as if each man bore a charmed life, did the Russians pour on. Confiding in their enormous superiority of numbers, deluded by their generals into the belief that they were contending, not with the English, but with the Turks, mad with drink, and blind with fanaticism, they sprang upon the thirsty points of the bayonets, and pushed on as if the rifle balls had been a shower of hailstones. Every instant through that eventful morning, long, long after the twilight of dawn had been succeeded by the misty dimness of a rainy and lowering day, did Mark gaze upon the struggle with compressed lips and throbbing heart. He scarcely dared to hope for victory, and every instant he expected to see his unfaltering countrymen give way, borne down by the furious shocks of the massive columns that successively charged them. As the tide of battle ebbed and flowed, as the ammunition of the English became exhausted, and their men worn out by hunger and fatigue, and Mark saw the Russians brutally transfixing the wounded with their bayonets, or savagely braining with their clubbed musket-buts every bleeding sufferer they fell in with, his indignation nearly overpowered him, and he was hardly able to resist the impulse to snatch a weapon from some dead man's hand, and plunge into the battle. But still, nobly, staunchly, and steadily, did the weary survivors of the little English force withstand the attacks of the enemy. Deeds of heroism were everywhere enacted, that, singly, would have won immortal praise, but which at Inkerman were eclipsed by the brilliancy of the courage which every humble soldier exhibited on that deathless day. Among the Russians who again and again assailed the position of the English Guards, fighting hand to hand with stabbing steel and crushing musket-stock, and obstinately renewing the bayonet-charge over and over again, Mark noted one man who was conspicuous alike by his stature and

his courage. Towering above his sturdy comrades, and rivalling in bulk and height the tallest of the English grenadiers, this Russian was a target for countless rifle balls, and an object of repeated personal assaults. But, as if his breast were invulnerable, he passed on, scathless, amidst a hail of bullets, and in every fresh encounter his powerful arm seemed nerved to increased efforts. There was no mistaking his identity. Yanos was recognised by Mark at once. A pang shot through the generous breast of the young Englishman. He thought that it was the Esthonian's hopeless love for Katinka that was urging him on to tempt death, for it was evident that no ordinary impulse prompted Yanos, ever the first to attack, ever the last to retire from, the unbroken living rampart of the English Guards. At last a change took place in the order of the Russian masses, and for a while Mark saw Yanos no more, but watched the current of the fight, as it went on, unquenched, unslackening. Suddenly a loud cheer broke forth on the flank of the English. A French division, brought up rapidly to the rescue by General Bosquet, came hurrying down the hill, shouting, and firing upon the Russians.

The fire was withering and murderous on both sides for a moment, but the gallant French charged hotly with the bayonet, and the Russians broke, and retired in disorder, but still sullenly, and disputing every inch of ground. Resisting, but beaten, gathered in crowds rather than in squares, the Russians were driven down the hill with their faces to the foe, and slaughtered in numbers at every halt. The carnage became ghastly. In the valley the retreat became a panic. The bridge over the Tchernaya was choked with fugitives; the young archdukes and their mounted staff recklessly trampled down their own men in their haste to escape; the dead and wounded fell like grass before the scythe. In the midst of the confusion and slaughter, Mark plainly distinguished *one* noble form that rose above the heads of the crowd, and boldly fronted the pursuers. At the head of a knot of Russians who seemed resolved to sell their lives dearly, was again seen Yanos the Esthonian. Like a rock among raging waves, the giant stood in advance of his comrades, and sternly eyed the Zouaves as they rushed cheering down the slope. Mark watched him with an intentness amounting to agony; he shouted to him to surrender, for Heaven's sake, but the words were drowned in the roar of battle. For a few moments Mark saw the Esthonian,—all his comrades cut down beside him

—struggling single-handed against a crowd of foes; bleeding, tottering, pierced by twenty wounds, but fighting still, like a lion against a herd of furious wolves. At last he fell, and the tide of war flowed on over his body. When the battle was over, Mark, having deposited Katinka in a place of safety, proceeded to the spot where the Esthonian lay. Yanos was quite dead; his tawny hair floated over his forehead, and his blue eyes were open, but there was no ferocity on his rigid features, where a strange smile rested; and clasped to his wounded and bleeding breast was a little glove of white leather, one which Katinka had dropped the evening before.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Inkerman, that sad, but glorious battle fought against fearful odds, amid mist and rain and twilight, and which had contrasted by its gloomy terrors with the magnificent spectacle of the Alma, and the chivalric pageant of Balaklava, was over at last.

The arrival of their brave allies had saved the exhausted English, and the Thermopylæ of the nineteenth century was won over the frantic hordes of a despot who spared no artifice that cunning could dictate, to urge his drunken soldiers on to conquest and to carnage. But the victory had been paid for in a costly manner. Many French, very many English, lay cold and gory among the rocky ravines, among heaps of slaughtered Muscovites. Several generals, and many officers of the highest distinction and promise, were numbered among the dead, and the fatal list contained the names of those who had served their country during half a century, and of those whose youthful valour and ardent aspirations had seemed to forbode great deeds and great triumphs for the future, which were now to be buried with them in the reeking pits upon the battle-field. The white-haired colonel, on whom his soldiers looked with the affectionate respect due to a father, lay beside the beardless ensign, who had for the first time carried the colours of the regiment under fire, and whose blooming cheek and boyish courage had been thus early withered by the same stroke of death that had beaten down his aged and valiant commander. The veteran general, whose exploits in the rude warfare of South Africa had thrown a romance even over the desolate mountains of Caffreland, had

fallen in those dark valleys, among mounds of dead and dying men, some dressed in the sombre livery of the Czar, and some in the scarlet uniform of England. Ship after ship sailed for the distant hospitals of Scutari, each laden with a terrible cargo of mangled sufferers; party after party of tired soldiers roved over the wide-spread scene of the late conflict, to succour the wounded that lay groaning among bushes and rocks, and every tent and house held some ghastly sacrifice to the stern necessity of war. Mark had found in Balaklava a secure refuge for Katinka, and had busied himself in inquiring for some vessel about to sail for the west, in which a passage might be engaged. He succeeded at last in obtaining what he sought,—room for Katinka and himself on board a large merchant vessel, which had come to Balaklava deeply laden, and was going back in ballast. The captain agreed to accept Mark and Katinka, in whose story he took a compassionate interest, as passengers to Southampton, and it was announced that in a few days the vessel would weigh anchor and sail for England. Before the voyage, however, Mark felt that he had a duty to fulfil. Although his conduct towards Katinka during the whole journey from Khopol had been characterised by a scrupulous delicacy and respect, which could have been equalled only by that with which a brother would have treated a sister, he still felt that in the eyes of the world a farther delay of their marriage might be misconstrued, and he was resolved that no breath of suspicion should ever rest upon the reputation of his beloved Katinka. Accordingly, in the midst of the mournful scenes of patient suffering that made Balaklava horrible, the double ceremony that was rendered necessary by the difference of religion between the lovers, was performed by an English chaplain and a Greek Papas. It was a sad wedding, and one whose solemn and unjoyous air matched well with the melancholy that pervaded the spot near which so frightful a holocaust had been offered up to war. Mark himself, usually so gay and buoyant, looked anxious and depressed, while poor Katinka wept as if her heart would break, as she thought of her dead sister and deserted father, and reproached herself for being thus free and united to the bridegroom her heart had chosen, as if her comparative good fortune had been a wrong done to those whom she so dearly loved, and with whose sorrows and dark fate even a fitful gleam of happiness and sunshine so forcibly contrasted.

At last the day which preceded the departure of the ship

which was to convey the young wife and husband to England arrived, and in the afternoon the captain sent a boat on shore, and the coxswain came into the town to warn Mark of the necessity for immediately going on board. The vessel was to sail by daybreak the next morning.

The preparations of the young pair were few and soon over, and an hour later Mark and Katinka found themselves on the deck of the ship, which was a fine three-masted vessel of considerable tonnage.

Katinka, who had never before been on board of any large craft, was, for the first time since her departure from Nicholaev, amused and delighted by the novelty of the objects around her. She took the greatest interest in everything connected with the ship, and walked for hours about the deck by Mark's side, asking innumerable questions about the rigging, making all sorts of guesses respecting the use of the strange nautical gear around her, and laughing at her own blunders with something of the mirth of former days. Mark, though pleased to see his little wife regaining a portion of her former innocent merriment of character, and though he seemed to become more fond of Katinka, and more careful of her safety and happiness every day, still felt a load upon his mind. Since the day of Inkerman he had experienced the influence of a vague sense of gloom and apprehension, that was not exactly a presentiment of coming evil, nor yet the mere effect of the hideous slaughter he had witnessed, but partook of both these characters, and which dejected him in spite of himself.

He was not ill, certainly. He was tired, harassed, careful, but not ill. And Katinka's health was not such as to cause him doubt or anxiety. On the contrary, now that she was relieved from the tormenting cares and the ceaseless terrors that had beset her since she left St. Petersburg, her colourless face had regained much of its former bloom, and her blue eyes had begun to resume their laughing and sunny brilliancy. But however causeless his dejection might be, Mark could not shake it off; and even when he trod the deck of the good English ship, bound for his native shore, and with his darling bride leaning on his arm, instead of dissipating itself as he had hoped it would do at the very contact of his foot with tough planks of British oak, and at the very flutter of the British bunting at the mast-head above him, the shadow thickened into deeper blackness. As Katinka was merrily prattling about sails and yards, and blocks and cordage, Mark answered

mechanically, but never smiled, although Katinka prettily chided his melancholy. Night came down, and the darkness gradually sank brooding over the waters, while the sable hulls and tapering spars of the vessels anchored in the roads loomed indistinctly through the hazy atmosphere. The lights of the town began to twinkle.

Katinka, tired of talking, and pouting like a spoiled child at Mark for his depression, had relapsed into silence, and they both stood looking over the bulwarks at the dim outline of the shore. Mark's fancy, distempered by the burden that oppressed his mind, now assumed a more lugubrious character, though he feared to distress Katinka by relating its workings. He imagined that the masts of the vessels around, with their white sails hanging carelessly in festoons from the yards, resembled a funeral procession of gigantic spectres, rocking themselves up and down in the mist, and grimly beckoning with their fleshless arms. Nor was this all, for the dark hulls loomed through the shades of night like a long train of mourning carriages, while the huge merchantman, on whose deck they stood, and which was moored farthest from shore, bore to Mark's eyes the boding appearance of the hearse that led the weird march.

An undefined fear came over Mark, usually so bold and confident, and he would have given much if Katinka and himself had been on shore again; but the fear of ridicule, the sense of shame we all feel when unable to give a valid reason for our conduct, and the wish to arrive in England with Katinka as soon as possible, prevented his even mentioning his involuntary wish. Katinka expressed herself sleepy and tired, and Mark led her down to the cabin which had been assigned to them, and having remained with her for half an hour, he then reascended to the deck. Walking to the stern, he leaned over the taffrail and contemplated musingly the dark water that danced and eddied around the rudder. The sea was calm enough, to all appearance, and yet Mark, who had been when a boy very familiar with the signs of the ocean, was not entirely satisfied with its aspect. The sea heaved up its mighty breast at intervals like some suffering monster panting in its giant pain, and those long swelling motions of the surging water seemed to become more frequent by degrees; while the ship, moored by two anchors, stem and stern, rose and sank with a slowly rocking motion like that of the pendulum of a clock. The light wind scarcely raised a

speck of foam upon the surface of the deep, but it moaned and sighed as mournfully as the spirit of Cassandra may have wailed around the ruined walls of that Troy which had neglected her warnings. Mark, he knew not why, attached a meaning to the sorrowful voice of the breeze, and felt a vague sense of danger stealing more and more over his mind. He looked out anxiously to windward, and narrowly scanned the horizon, but could discover none of the usual signs of a storm. The second mate and two or three seamen were on deck, but they evidently saw nothing unusual or menacing in the weather, and Mark began to persuade himself that he was totally mistaken.

Hours passed away, and no change succeeded. Perhaps the plaintive notes of the wind were pitched in a little higher key, but all around looked calm and peaceful. Katinka was asleep below, and Mark would have sought a refuge from his annoying thoughts in slumber, but he could not close his eyes. A singular wakefulness took possession of him, and he returned to the deck, when the captain, who was at supper in his cabin, sent the boy who waited on him to invite Mark to share his repast. Mark, who was restlessly pacing the deck, complied at once, and was soon seated at the cabin table. He tried to eat, but his appetite was gone; and the good-natured captain soon observed his depressed spirits.

"Come!" said the captain, jovially, as he finished mixing the punch, and filled Mark's glass and his own, "come, cheer up, lad! A youngster like you, healthy and strong, with such a pretty little wife into the bargain, ought not to be in the doldrums. Pitch your melancholy overboard, my boy, and let's drink to our happy voyage to England; for a happy and a prosperous voyage it will be, I dare swear!" And the honest seaman pushed over one brimming glass towards Mark, and lifted the other to his lips.

Mark could not help answering the captain's jolly laugh by his old frank smile, as he took up his glass and gaily pledged the toast. But just as he was in the act of drinking, he uttered a loud exclamation, and the glass fell from his hand and was broken to shivers.

"What the devil!" ejaculated the captain, upsetting his own tumbler, and starting to his feet.

Mark stood staring like one who fancied he beheld an apparition.

"What's the matter with you, lad?" gasped out the captain,

half suffocated by the scalding liquor he had hurriedly swallowed.

"The barometer! the barometer!" cried Mark, as he pointed with an outstretched finger to the great weather-glass that hung in the cabin, and which had caught his eye as he was in the act of drinking the toast the captain had proposed.

"What ails it?" demanded the old mariner, wiping and adjusting his spectacles.

"Look for yourself!" cried Mark; "see to what a point the mercury has fallen—ay, and in an instant. I saw it suddenly sink in the tube myself, and I need not ask so old a seaman if he knows what *that* omen means."

"Why, if we were in the West Indian latitudes, now, my lad, I could read the riddle easy enough," answered the puzzled captain. "In the hurricane seas, one would know well enough that one must dowse sail and trim the ship for scudding, when one saw such a sign. But then, you see, out here ——"

The sentence was never finished. The ship bounded like a frightened horse, rising with one quick rush to the crest of a mountainous wave, and then fell crashing into the hollow trough of the sea. And then the might of the tempest struck her with awful force, and made her reel throughout her length, and heel over fearfully, while a mass of white and foaming water poured like a cascade over her bulwarks.

"This *is* a hurricane, if ever I felt one," cried the captain, as, bareheaded, he ran up on deck, his speaking-trumpet in his hand. Mark followed him at once, but, on reaching the deck he found the violence of the wind scarcely left him the power to stand, and he was obliged to cling to a shroud, to prevent the water that swept the deck from carrying him overboard.

The old captain, clinging to the rigging, his grey hair tossed by the wind, was shouting through his trumpet orders which no one attended to. The crew came rushing up, but they looked stupefied, and merely held on to the weather shrouds. The ship careened over in a frightful manner, and lay helplessly on her side.

"Get axes!" roared the captain; "cut away the masts; all our lives depend upon it."

The first mate ran below, and brought up three or four axes, but no one volunteered to mount the rigging.

"Cut away the topmasts!" shouted the captain. "For

Heaven's sake, Mr. Forster, bear a hand! Those cursed cowardly lubbers will drown us all."

Mark sprang forward, and caught an axe in his hand. All his courage and energy were restored when he could meet and combat the danger. "Follow me, lads, and do as I do," cried he, in a loud cheery voice, that made the paralysed sailors start to their duty. Mark boldly flung himself into the rigging, went up it with the agility of a practised seaman, and his axe soon fell, with quick sharp blows, upon the maintopmast. The men swarmed up after him, for sailors and soldiers will do anything for a leader who says "come!" instead of "go!" Hatchets and knives were plied with zeal and vigour, while the white seething sea poured like a cataract over the weather bulwarks, and the whole side of the ship to port was buried in the waves. Over went the topmasts at last, with all their clinging cordage and yards, cut away by the axes, and blown by the fierce wind into the sea. A long loud cry of exultation followed, as the ship righted triumphantly. Every man came safe down by the stays and shrouds, and the vessel, though strained and crippled, floated once more, a ship, and not a wreck, upon the waters. Mark scarcely stayed to receive the rough grip of the captain's hand, and hear his homely thanks for the service rendered, but hurried down to Katinka, whom he found half distracted with terror. The poor girl was alarmed and terrified, and clung to her husband, imploring him not to leave her. Mark soothed her agitation to the utmost of his power, but thinking that in such a tempest the cabin was the most dangerous part of a ship, as offering the least chance of escape, he persuaded her to come on deck with him.

Dressed in a loose morning wrapper, her fair hair dishevelled and falling in golden coils to her waist, Katinka accompanied Mark to the deck. The scene around was one to make the stoutest heart quail. The sea was as white as milk, except where the hollows between the huge waves yawned darkly; the surges rose like volcanic mountains; the wind blew with a fury that flung large sheets of foam high into the troubled air. The fleet had dispersed; signals were made, and minute-guns were fired on every side, in signal of distress; but there was no help at hand; so cannon roared, and Bengal-lights burned, in vain. Some ships had dragged their anchors, others had broken or cut their cables, and drifted ashore; others, again, were riding out the gale, storm-tossed and shattered. Some of the largest

and heaviest war-vessels of England and France, floating citadels, with oaken ramparts, formidable artillery, and crowded garrisons, were vainly striving with the hurricane, and driving towards the shore. Mark and Katinka saw no signs of help, no immunity from peril, save far away, where the lights of Balaklava burned peacefully upon the solid shore. How the ship tossed and rocked, and laboured with creaking timbers and leaking ribs in the strong sea! All her chance of safety lay in her two stout cables, and all night long they bore the strain that racked their fibres.

The cold grey morning came at last; the wind that had flattened down the waves abated, but the sea rose higher, and the ship tossed fearfully. Far and near the barren coast was strewn with wrecks, and many a stately vessel lay, helpless and dismasted, buffeting the shore. Mark looked around him for comfort, but saw none. One of the cables that had been the safeguard of the vessel, snapped with a noise like a cannon-shot. The ship now rode only by the bow-anchor, and it was terrible to see the strain upon the cable, now taut as an iron bar. She heaved and pitched, and tossed and bounded, that gallant ship, like a wild horse with a lasso round his neck; and every time that the cable checked her, she dipped her bows under water with a force that threatened her destruction at each successive plunge.

"We must cut her loose," said the captain, in Mark's hearing, to the chief mate; "she cannot stand this knocking about for many minutes. Set the storm-jib; shake out a reef of the foresail, and stand by to cut away the cable."

The mate hurried forward, but scarcely had the sails been set, when the cable snapped with a thundering report.

"Put up your helm!" roared the captain to the steersman. But the ship lurched heavily over, and scudded, as helplessly as a drifting log, before the furious gale. She would no longer obey her helm. The captain ordered more sail to be put upon her; but no sooner had the jibs been set and the mainsail shaken out, than the bowsprit was carried away and the mainsail was rent into ribbons. The ship drifted past the harbour of Sebastopol—on, on, nearer and nearer the land.

Several transports, French and English, were in distress among the rocks and near the beach. Some were absolute wrecks, some aground, some still trying to weather the gale. A swarm of mounted Cossacks galloped along the cliffs, making prisoners the few who reached shore in safety, and

pitilessly firing upon the crews of the vessels yet afloat. Katinka fixed her blue eyes imploringly on her husband's face, and clung to him with the instinct of desperation. Mark was very pale, but he looked coolly round him for the means of safety, while his arm encircled Katinka's waist. The ship now neared the breakers, and the sheets of tumbling foam and the jagged rocks were very near her bows. Three seamen strained at the wheel, but the helm was useless, and the ship hurried unresistingly to destruction.

"Try the boats, captain!" said Mark.

"It is child's play! no boat could live!" answered the captain despondingly.

"Never mind, lower away, and try!" said Mark. The boats, the only two that were sea-worthy, were lowered. One was swamped and stoved in at once by the angry waves. The other was launched. "Now, my Katinka!" whispered Mark, catching up his little wife in his arms, and preparing to place her in the boat. Four men leapt into it, and grasped the oars. A rush of the alarmed sailors took place, and the boat was laden till she sank gunwale deep. "Cowardly hounds!" cried Mark; "come back, half of you; we may all be saved if you will have the courage of men." Two or three of the best seamen obeyed, the rest tried to push off. In a moment the boat was overtopped by a white-crested wave. She filled, and went down. The drowning cry of the mariners rang horridly for an instant. In the next moment, the ship struck on the rocks. A huge billow swept her decks, carrying away four men. Mark clasped Katinka to his breast, and held on to the nearest shroud. The masts quivered, snapped, and fell over the side. The deck blew up with an echoing report, the white waves came boiling up through the gaping timbers. The ship was a wreck. Masts, beams, rigging, and corpses, were the sport of the storm. The scattered planks were separated, and the vessel was gone. With one fearful scream, every human being sank at once below the surface. Mark was among the first who emerged from the bubbling surf. He was a powerful swimmer. Clinging to a floating spar he glared around for Katinka. She came to the surface at last. Her pale, beautiful face and long hair appeared for an instant, and then the sea sucked her down again, the golden hair alone floating amid the foam for an instant. Mark dived, and soon re-appeared, supporting Katinka. He lifted her fair head by a great effort above the sea, and her blue eyes fastened despairingly on his face.

"Save me, Mark, save me!" she cried in gurgling accents, as she clasped him in her arms. Mark strove to swim. But Katinka, wildly clinging to him, prevented his limbs from having free play, and they both sank. They emerged again.

"Loose me, Katinka! dearest love, be calm. I will save you if I can move, but by clinging thus you will drown us both," gasped Mark, faintly, as he caught at a spar. But fear can rarely be persuaded: Katinka was deaf to his voice; in her terror she entwined her limbs with his, and again they sank into the deep and surging water. Mark re-appeared for an instant, but, missing Katinka, he boldly dived again, though faint and exhausted, but he rose no more above the seething flood. During the afternoon, the bodies of Mark and Katinka, locked in each other's arms, and covered with tangled sea-weed, were flung upon the beach by the waves.

CHAPTER XXXII.

In the most squalid hut which the village of Khopol contains, in a low-raftered room, wellnigh bare of furniture, and blackened with smoke, sits over a smouldering turf-fire a miserable old man, who croons to himself, as he spreads his shrivelled hands before the fire, "Childless! childless! and alone!" This is Jacob Petrovich, who was captured by a patrol of gendarmes in his fruitless attempt to escape, when Mark and Katinka succeeded in eluding their pursuers. At a village forty miles from Khopol, Jacob had been stopped by a party of soldiers, his passport demanded, and himself arrested and led back to Khopol. Prince Jargonoff placed him in the most wretched hut in the hamlet, and meditated on some new species of torture to punish the old man for his own flight and that of his daughter. But the news of Katinka's death, derived from a soldier who had seen her at Khopol before he was drawn for the conscription, and who had recognised her features as her corpse lay cold on the Crimean beach, had reached Khopol; and old Jacob Petrovich was beyond the power of Prince Jargonoff. Even the petty tyrant of Khopol dared not torment with scourge and dungeon the victim of mental alienation. All day long the poor old man sits over the feeble peat fire, tended only by the faithful Yaska, whose tenderness and care towards him are unceasing, and without whom he would

have ere now died of hunger, like a houseless dog. All day he utters at intervals the plaintive cry, "Childless! childless! and alone!" the only words he is ever heard to speak, except the names of his lost children, which he at times repeats in a low voice. Yaska alone can soothe his grief, which occasionally becomes a paroxysm of convulsive strength, and her he obeys like a child, though no other voice can elicit from him reply or recognition. Yaska watches him as carefully as if the love she bore to her dead nurselings could now alone be proved by her kindness towards their bereaved father, her kind master of earlier days. Every morning when the sun shines, she leads old Jacob to Anielka's grave beneath the rustling cypress tree, and here the old man seems happier than elsewhere, as if he felt himself once more in the company of his child. And after a time Yaska takes his hand and draws him away, and he follows, meek and docile as an infant, with a childish obedience that it makes Yaska's heart ache to witness, yet often looking wistfully back at the grave around which his thoughts seem centred. And then he quietly enters his hut, and sits before the fire, still moaning feebly to himself. Of those who sat around the happy hearth of Jacob Petrovich not many months ago, the only survivors, save the traitor Paul Vlad and his daughter Thekla, are Eugene Klapka toiling in his clanking chains, yet ignorant of Anielka's fate, and poor old Jacob himself, who mutters ever his sad lament, "Childless! childless! and alone!"

THE END.